

# Clavis Cantici :

OR, AN

## EXPOSITION

Of the SONG of

*Bible. O.T.*  
*K*

## SOLOMON.

---

By the Reverend Mr. *JAMES DURHAM*,  
late Minister of the Gospel at *Glasgow*.

---

Col. iii. 16. *Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all Wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, singing with Grace in your Hearts to the Lord.*

Eph. v. 2. *And walk in Love, as Christ also hath loved us—*

1 Cor. xiii. 13. *And now abideth Faith, Hope, Love, these three: but the greatest of these is Love.*

---

EDINBURGH:

Printed by THOMAS LUMSDEN, and Company, and sold  
by JAMES MACK-EUEN, at *Buchanan's Head*, against *St.*  
*Clement's-Church* in the *Strand*, *London*. M.DCC.XXIV.

# Clavis Cantici :

OR AN

EXPOSITION

OF THE

SOLOMON.

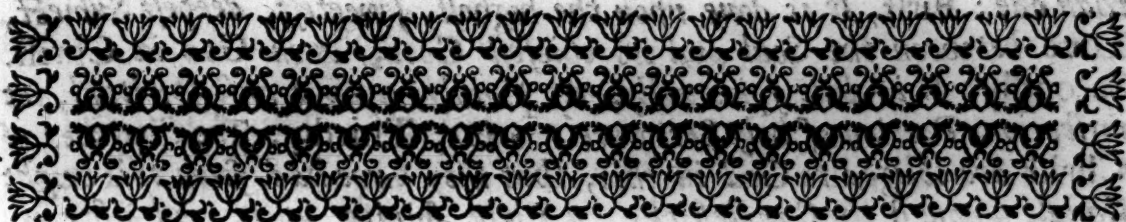
By the Reverend Mr. JAMES DURHAM,  
late Minister of St. Andrew's Church, London.



And, according to the custom of the Stationers' Company, is here presented to the public, by the Stationers' Company, in the year 1711.

EDINBURGH :

Printed by Thomas Bland, and Company, and sold  
by James Blair, at Bland's Head, against St.  
Andrew's Church, in London. MDCCLXXI.



# TO THE Christian Reader.



**C**OD being the immortal Soul's chief Good, it must needs follow, that what unites the Soul unto God, must be the Soul's chief Ornament and Grace: And such is Love, that Principium uniens, or Principle uniting the Soul unto God. Whence it is, that, even in good, spiritual and elevated Reason, the Apostle prefers Love among the Soul's three cardinal Virtues, 1 Cor. 13. 13. And now abideth Faith, Hope and Love; and the greatest of these is Love. Indeed, Faith, going out from the Sinner, to rest upon Jesus Christ the Justifier of the Ungodly; and there is no Sinner nor unclean Thing in Heaven; and Hope, looking unto, and after, a Country that we are not yet Possessors of; and Love, yea, Love alone, filling Heaven unto all Eternity; it is certain that Love is the Soul's most adorning Ornament, its most heavenly Frame.

Now, of all Books in holy Scripture, it hath pleased the Holy Ghost to entitle The Song of Solomon, or his Book of Loves, thus, שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים, The Song of Songs: All Songs, all Loves, all Outgoings of the Soul being invaluable to this Soul's Song, and Love uniting Christ and the Soul.

This posthume Work, then, of the precious Author, Mr. Durham, is commendable to the Churches (if there be need of any additional Commendation beyond the naming of his Name to it) upon more Accounts

## To the Christian Reader.

than one: First, It is done upon the highest, sweetest, deepest Subject, Love between the Soul and its chiefest Good, even God in Christ. Secondly, It is done spiritually, yet plainly, upon a most spiritual, yet mysterious Portion of holy Scripture. And, Thirdly, The Churches of Christ are obliged to God in this, that they have had, from this bright Candle amongst the Candlesticks, a Light shining upon, and discovering those Two mysterious Books of Scripture, Canticles and Revelation. Fourthly, If a Word fitly spoken is as Apples of Gold in Pictures of Silver, Prov. 25. 11. sure, then, it was highly commending of God's Goodness to the Author, that he was led on this Work of Preaching, Lecturing, and Writing, on this Song of Loves, those sweet Concords, and begun Musick of Heaven between Christ and Souls, and that in Time of sad Discords and very immusical Jarrings in the Church; An Argument of an excellent Soul-frame in a very evil Time: A Demonstration whereof, and of his healing Disposition, O how apparent is it, in that rare Piece of his, upon Scandal!

I shall not trouble thee any further, save that I cordially wish the Lord may be pleased so to bless thy Perusal of this present Treatise, as it may tend, not only to the present, but also to the everlasting Well-being of thy Soul. And so I bid thee farewell.





# *Clavis Cantici :*

OR, A

## KEY of the SONG,

Useful for opening up thereof.



**T**HIS is a place of scripture, the exposition whereof many in all ages have shunned to adventure upon; and truly I have looked upon it, of a long time, as not convenient to be treated upon before all auditories, nor easy by many to be understood; especially because of the height of spiritual expressions, and mysterious raptures of Divine Love, and the sublime and excellent expressions of the Bridegroom therein contained, which would require much liveliness of frame, and acquaintance in experience with the things here spoken of, and nearness in walking with God, as being necessary for finding out the mind and meaning of the Spirit of God therein: Yet we are now brought, by help of his Grace, to essay the Interpretation of it, upon these following considerations.

*First*, Because it is acknowledged by all, not only to be authentick scripture, but an excellent piece thereof; and therefore is to be made use of by the Church, and not to be hid, nor to be laid aside, as if the meaning thereof were not to be searched into, because it seems dark and obscure.

2. Because the subject and matter of it is so Divine, carrying along with it many various cases, both of particular souls, as also of the Church, both visible and invisible, with many excellent commendations of Christ the Bridegroom, which ought to be the subject of his friends meditations, and

cannot but be profitable, if he bless them ; there being here maps, almost for all conditions.

3. Because the stile and composition is so divine and excellent, carrying affections alongst with it, and captivating them in the very reading ; so that few can read this Song, but they must fall in love with it : We would therefore see what is within it, if at least we may get a taste of that which doth so sweetly relish.

4. It seems the Holy Ghost, by putting it into such a mould, intended to commend it : and if it be true, that all the poetical pieces of Scripture ought especially to be learned and taken notice of, so should this, it being so commended to us in that frame.

5. The strain and subject of it is so very spiritual, that it necessitates the students thereof to aim at some nearness with God, and ordinarily it leaves some stamp upon their affections ; which is not the least cause, nor the smallest encouragement to me in this undertaking.

We shall not stand to prove the authority of it : It carries a divine stile in its bosom ; nor is there need to inquire who was the penman of it, it being clear that *Solomon*, who was furnished with wisdom and understanding, as never a king before or since was, is honoured to be the *Amanuensis* of the Holy Ghost, in putting this Song upon record. Whether after, or before his backsliding, it is not much to us ; though it be most probable that it was after, in the warmth of a spirit sensible of this so great a deliverance : For here we may, as it were, see him making use of that experience of the vanity of all things he had found, coming to the fear of God as the conclusion of the whole matter ; whereof this Song of Love is not a little evidence, and which looks like his own saying, *Eccles. 12. 13.*

The means which are necessary for our more perspicuous handling, and your more profitable hearing, of this profound Scripture, will be,

1. Some acquaintance with the whole word of God, but mainly the book of the *Psalms*, and other songs recorded in the word ; as also, with the gospel, and such places as have most likeness to it.

2. Acquaintance with the cases of others, either by reading or mutual fellowship ; but most of all, it is requisite, that one have some experimental knowledge of the way of God towards his own heart : *He who is so wise as to understand these Things, even he shall understand this loving kindness of the Lord.* Such kind of experience is one of the best commentaries upon this text.

3. Watchfulness over our selves, keeping our heart with all keeping, and studying a tender frame of spirit, that we may have a conscience always void of offence towards God : Looseness all the week will not be a frame for the *Canticles*. It is not the simple being of grace, but the lively operation and exercise thereof, which prompts and disposes either to speak to purpose, or to

for opening up the Song.

3

to hear of this with profit; he would grow in grace who would grow in knowledge here: neither have others ground to expect that this secret of the Lord shall be with them, or that they shall be of a quick understanding who fear him not. One may have grace, and not a lively frame for this, except grace be acting, and in exercise.

4. Much conversing with the Bridegroom, especially by prayer, that he, who causes the dull to understand doctrine, may manifest himself, and open our eyes to behold these wondrous things, and that he may bless us in the knowledge of his will in this we undertake, which so specially concerns him and us; for this scripture may be dark to these who speak on it, if this be not; and a sealed Book to you who hear it, if these things be wanting: whereas, *if these be in us and abound, we shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of this piece of sacred scripture.*

Now, that we may have the more clear access to speak profitably of the matter of this Song, and that our way of opening and applying of it (which may possibly in some things be different from others) may be the better cleared, we shall, 1. premit some propositions concerning it; 2. draw some conclusions from these; both which we shall endeavour shortly to clear and confirm, as useful to be taken alongst in our proceeding.

The *First* Proposition then is this, This Song is a piece of divine scripture, and a most excellent part thereof (which we shall speak to more fully on the title) and so of equal authority with other scriptures (wherein holy men spoke, as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost) and tendeth to the edifying of the Church, and making of the man of God perfect, even as they do. For,

*First*, This Song hath ever been received into the Canon, and accounted (as they speak) for canonick, as the rest of the scriptures were. It was never questioned by the *Jews* (as *Mercer. prefat. ad Cant.* cleareth) but was still received by them, and transmitted to the *Gentile* Churches, who received the scriptures of the Old Testament from them, who had the Oracles of God in keeping: and that the same hath been universally received by Christians, may appear by the records of the Councils, and writings of the Fathers, where the catalogue of the books of the holy scripture is set down.

2. It carrieth the authority of the holy Ghost engraven upon it, as evidently as any piece of scripture. not only as to its matter, manner of expression, divine stile; but mostly in that divine power and efficacy it hath on hearts and spirits (especially of the more discerning, who best know Christ's voice, as his sheep) whereby it relishes so sweetly, and elevates them to such an holy ravishment, that it obtaineth the testimony from all, that there is something divine in it, and more than can be in humane writings, even tho' they cannot particularly tell the meaning of it; that holding true here, which one said of a book which was something obscure, *That which I understand* (said

he) is excellent; therefore I judge, that which I understand not, to be so also, though it exceed my reach. And that it is Christ who speaketh, and that it is the language of the Holy Ghost, and can be applied to no other, is by a divine conviction extorted from the reader, and hearer of it; so that confessedly and deservedly, it beareth this title, *A Song of Songs*.

This Song must either be attributed to the Spirit, as the chief Author of it, tho' Solomon was the penman; or we must say, it was not only penned, but indited merely by some man, (Solomon, or whoever he be) led by his own spirit, or some other spirit, without the Spirit of God: But none of these last can be said. What other spirit can so speak of Christ and the Church? What other song, even of the most holy men, can be compared to this? Was it ever equalled? Or can it be equalled? And if it cannot be the fruit of the spirit of a mere man, tho' in the most holy frame; then it must be inspired by the Spirit, in wonderful wisdom, and a most Divine Stile, compacting the mysteries of communion with God in Christ, in this short Song: Wherefore we say, it is justly called, *A Song of Songs*; whereby it is preferred, not only to all humane songs, but even to other scriptural songs; which were blasphemous to do, were it not of a Divine rise and authority.

There are two objections, which sometimes have been started by some; but they will not be of weight to infringe this truth. The First is, That there is no passage of this Song cited in the New Testament: But citation of scriptures in the New Testament doth not give authority to them. They are cited as having authority, and not to get it; and therefore there are many scriptures in the Old Testament, which were never cited in the New: Although it may be said, there are many near resemblances (at least) in the New Testament, to divers passages in this Song; as the often stiling the Church a *Vineyard*, *Matth. 20.* and comparing the Church's union with Christ to *Marriage*, *Matth. 22.* &c. That Christ *standeth at the door and knocketh*, *Rev. 3. 20.* taken as it were from *Song 5. 2.* The *Virgins falling asleep*, *Matth. 25.* The efficacy of grace, called *drawing*, *John 6. 44.* taken from *Chap. 1. 4.* &c. Christ in the parables called a *King*, or the *King* (which by way of eminency is applied to him, *Psal. 45. 1, 2.*) Neither is the second objection of greater weight, to wit, That no proper Name of God is to be found in this Song: For, 1. 'Tis so also in other Scriptures, as in the book of *Esther*; The scriptures authority doth not depend on naming the Name of God, but on having his warrant and authority. 2. This Song being allegorical and figurative, 'tis not so meet, nor consistent with its stile, to have God named under proper names, as in other scriptures. Yet, 3. There are titles and descriptions here given to an excellent person, which can agree to none other, but Christ, the eternal Son of God; as the *King*, *O thou whom my soul loveth*, the  
chief

## for opening up the Song.

chief of ten thousand, the Rose of Sharon, and the like, whereby his eminency is singularly set out above all others in the world.

In sum, there are none of the characters, usually condescended on as necessary for evidencing the authority of holy scripture, wanting here; this Song being a Divine subject, received into the Canon, bearing a Divine stamp, having much majesty in its stile, agreeing with itself and other scriptures fully; impartially speaking out the blots and adversities of the Bride, as well as her beauty and prosperity, and written by a prophet and penman of holy writ, to wit, *Solomon*.

The *Second* Proposition is, That this Song is not to be taken properly, (and *κατά τὸν ὄντι*) or literally, that is, as the words do at first sound; but it is to be taken and understood spiritually, figuratively and allegorically, as having some spiritual meaning contained under these figurative expressions, made use of throughout this Song: My meaning is, that when it speaketh of a *Marriage*, *Spouse*, *Sister*, *Beloved*, *Daughters of Jerusalem*, &c. these expressions are not to be understood properly of such, but as holding forth something of a spiritual nature under these.

I grant it hath a literal meaning; but I say, that literal meaning is not immediate, and that which first looketh out, as in historical scriptures, or others which are not figurative; but that which is spiritually and especially meant by these allegorick and figurative speeches, is the literal meaning of this Song: so that its literal sense is mediate, representing the meaning, not immediately from the words, but mediately from the scope, that is, the intention of the Spirit, which is couched under the figures and allegories, here made use of. For, *A literal sense* (as it is defined by *Rivet* out of the School-men) is that which floweth from such a place of scripture as intended by the Spirit in the words, whether properly or figuratively used, and is to be gathered from the whole complex expression together, applied thereunto, as in the exposition of parables, allegories and figurative scriptures, is clear. And it were as improper and absurd to deny a figurative sense (tho' literal) to these, as it were to fix figurative expositions upon plain scriptures, which are properly to be taken.

For there is a twofold literal sense of scripture. 1. Proper and immediate, as where 'tis said, *Solomon* married *Pharaoh's* daughter. The second is figurative and mediate, as when it is said, *Matth. 22. 2. A certain King made a marriage to his Son*, &c. Both have a literal meaning; the first immediate, fulfilled in *Solomon*; the second is mediate, setting out Gods calling *Jews* and *Gentiles* unto fellowship with his Son; and so that parable is to be understood in a spiritual sense. Now, we say, this Song (if we would take up its true sense and meaning) is not to be understood the first way, properly and immediately; but the second way, figuratively and mediately, as holding forth some spiritual thing under borrowed expressions: Which will further appear from these things;

First,

*First*, There can be no edification in setting out humane love (amongst parties properly understood) so largely and lively ; and yet edification must be the end of this Song, being a part of scripture : it must have therefore an higher meaning than the words at first will seem to bear.

2. There can be no parties mentioned, beside Christ and his Bride, to whom this Song can agree ; nor can any proper meaning thereof be assigned, which can make it applicable to these parties : and therefore it cannot be understood properly, but figuratively ; and that not of any other, but of Christ and Believers. To *Solomon* it cannot agree in its application, nor to his Queen, yea, to no man, if it be taken in a proper sense : For, 1. These commendations given to the Bridegroom, *Chap. 5.* to the Bride, *Chap. 4, 6, 7.* if properly understood, would be monstrous, blasphemous, and ridiculous ; such as *to have teeth like a flock of sheep, an head like Carmel, &c.* and so in many other things. 2. Some things are attributed to this *Solomon*, who is the subject of this Song, that were not within *Solomon's* reach, as that, his presence at the table (*Chap. 1. 12.*) *maketh her spikenard to smell*, which influence cannot proceed from one man more than another ; and *Chap. 3. 11.* where it is said, *He made a chariot, and paved it with love*, which is no material thing, and so could be no pavement in *Solomon's* chariot. 3. That *Solomon* being the penman of this Song, yet speaketh of *Solomon* in the second person, *Thou, O Solomon*, *Chap. 8. 12.* makes it appear that some other was designed than himself ; and many such like expressions that fill up the matter of this Song, (such as spices, gardens, &c.) cannot be understood properly of these very things themselves, but of some other thing veiled under them : And so also, when she is called *terrible as an army with banners*, it cannot be understood of *Solomon's* Queen ; and applying it to the Church, we cannot understand it of any carnal terror, which the external aspect of the Church doth beget in beholders.

3. The stile and expressions will bear out more than any humane love, or any humane object, upon which men set their love : We are sure, no such love would be proponed to believers as a warranted pattern for their imitation, as if it would be commendable in them to be so much ravished and taken up, even with the most lovely creature.

4. Many things here are inconsistent with humane love, and that modesty that is required in it, (as the *Hebrews* themselves, *apud Mercer.* observe) as to propone him to others, to excite them to love him, others undertaking to follow after him, her speaking to him in her sleep, *Chap. 5. 2.* running in the night through the streets, and slighting him at the Door ; which by no means can admit a proper, literal, immediate sense, but must needs aim at something figurative. Beside, what reason can there be to plead a proper sense here, more than in other figurative scriptures of the same sort, as of these  
that

that speak of the soul's union with Christ, under the similitude of a marriage, and particularly that of *Psal. 45.* which is (as it were) a compend of this Song, and is looked upon by all as figurative?

If it be enquired in what sense we call this Song figurative, whether as typical or allegorical? The answering and clearing of this question will further us in the interpretation of this excellent scripture. We shall therefore shew,  
1. How *allegorical*, properly so called, differeth from *typical*. And, 2. Why we call this Song *allegorical*, and not *typical*.

*Allegorical* scriptures, or *allegories*, (we take *allegory* here as Divines do, who take it not as Grammarians or Rhetoricians, for a continued discourse of many figures together) properly and strictly taken (for sometimes *allegory* may be taken largely, and so may comprehend whatever is figurative, whether typical, tropological, analogical, &c. as the Apostle taketh it, *Gal. 4.* speaking of *Abraham's* two sons, which is yet properly a type) differeth from types, or typical scriptures, thus,

First, Types suppose still the verity of some history; as *Jonas* casting in the sea, and being in the fish's belly three days and three nights, when it is applied to Christ in the New Testament, it supposeth such a thing once to have been. Allegories again have no such necessary supposition, but are as parables proponed for some mystical end: thus, while 'tis said, *Matth. 22. 2.* *A certain King made a marriage, planted a vineyard, &c.* that place supposeth it not necessary, as to the being of the allegory, that ever such a thing was; it may be an allegory without that: but a type cannot be without reality in the thing or fact, which is made a type.

2. Types look only to matters of fact; and compare one fact with another (as Christ's lying in the Grave for such a time, to that of *Jonas*, who did ly so long in the whale's belly) but allegories take in words, sentences, doctrines both of faith and manners, as in the former examples is clear.

3. Types compare persons and facts under the Old Testament, with Persons and facts under the New, and is made up of something that is present, prefiguring another to come: allegories look especially to matters in hand, and intend the putting of some hid spiritual sense upon words, which at first they seem not to bear; whether the allegory be only in the Old Testament, or only in the New, or in both, it looks to the sense and meaning, being so considered in itself, as the words may best serve the scope, and teach or manifest the thing the Spirit intends, without any comparison betwixt this, and that of the Old Testament and New: Yea, an allegory may be in precepts, as, *Muzzle not the mouth of the ox,* and, *cut off the right hand,* &c. which have an allegorick sense in them.

4. Types are only historical as such, and the truth of the fact agreeing in the anti-type, make them up, it being clear in scripture that such things are types;

types; for we must not forge types without scripture-warrant: but allegories are principally doctrinal, and in their scope intend not to clear, or compare facts, but to hold forth and explain doctrines, or by such similitudes to make them the better understood, and to move and affect the more, or the more forcibly to convince; as *Nathan* made use of a parable, when he was about to convince *David*, 2 *Sam.* 12. 1, 2, &c.

5. Types in the Old Testament respect only some things, persons and events; as *Christ*, the gospel, and its spreading, &c. and cannot be extended beyond these: but allegories take in every thing that belongs either to doctrine, or instruction in faith, or to practice for ordering one's life.

Hence we may see, that allegories are much more extensive and comprehensive, in their meaning and application, than types (which cannot be extended further than some one thing) and so are much more doctrinal, and concern both the faith and manners of God's people much more, and may, for that, more warrantably be applied, and made use of for these ends.

2. We say, that this Song is not typical, as being made up of two histories, to wit, *Solomon's* marriage, and *Christ's*; nor doth it any way intend the comparing of these two together in the events, as to their facts or deeds: but it is allegorick, not respecting *Solomon*, or his marriage; but aiming to set out spiritual mysteries in figurative expressions, in such a manner as may most effectuate that end, for inlightning the judgment, and moving of the affections, without any respect to that story, or fact of *Solomon's*: For,

*First*, The strain and series of it is clearly allegorick, as the reading and considering of it will clear. 2. There can be no history to which it can relate, unto which the things spoken in this Song can be properly applied, as is said. 3. *Solomon's* marriage was at least twenty years before this Song was written. See on Song 7. concerning the *Tower of Lebanon*, and compare it with 1 *Kings* 7. 1, 2. and *Chap.* 6. ult. Therefore it cannot be thought so much as to be penned on that occasion, as an *Epithalamium* which was to be sung that night on which he was married, (and altho' occasion of penning of it were taken from that, yet would it not prove it typical, and to respect that as its type.) And, 4. What more is this allegory of a marriage to be accounted typical, than other places of scripture, where this same manner of expression is used? 5. If it be partly typical, how is this type to be made up? for *Christ's* love unto, and marriage with his Church, is not only set out here as peculiar to the New Testament, but is applicable to believers under the Old: There can therefore be here no comparing of facts of the Old Testament, with any thing answering to them in the New. If it be said, *Solomon's* marriage typified *Christ's* marrying of the Gentiles; I answer, Beside that there is no scripture for this conjecture (and 'tis hard to coin types without scripture authority, otherwise we might make *Solomon* a type in his many wives,

wives, possibly, and in many other such things ; also that of his marrying Pharaoh's daughter was against a law, as well as this) it cannot be said that this Song setteth out only Christ's love to the Gentiles, or the believing Gentiles their carriage and love to him : For, was it not fulfilled (in that which they would make its anti-type) before Christ came in the flesh, in the believing Jews ? yea, before ever that marriage was ; and therefore there can be no typical respect had to that marriage here. Beside, it would much darken the spiritualness and divineness of this Song, to make it in such a way typical, as having any proper fulfilling or meaning, that were possibly verified in the deed of any man. We conclude then, that this Song is simply allegorick.

We come now to a Third Proposition, which is this : The divine mystery intended, and set forth here, is the mutual love, and spiritual union and communion that is betwixt Christ and his Church, and their mutual carriage towards one another, in several conditions and dispensations. The comprehensive sum of this is contained in this Song, and compended by the Spirit, for the comfort and edification of the Church, under these figurative expressions : This, we say, is the scope and subject-matter of this Song ; For,

*First*, If the intent of this Song be to set out the spiritual carriage amongst spiritual parties, and the spiritual love which each hath to other ; then it must set out Christ's love to his Church, and hers to him : The reason is, Because there are no other spiritual Marriage-parties known, but Christ and his Church ; there is no other spiritual marriage, or spiritual marriage-love, but this. But this Song in its scope is to set out a spiritual marriage of spiritual parties, and their spiritual love ; therefore it must set out this.

2. The scope of this Song must be agreeable to the matter contained in it. Now the matter contained in it can agree to no other parties, and be approven in no other love : Therefore these descriptions given to the Bridegroom, can be given to no other but Christ ; and these given to the Bride by him, can be given to no other but the Church, and must speak out no less love, than that love of Christ's, the expressions being far beyond the love of all others : This will more fully appear in the opening up of the Song.

3. What is the scope of these allegories, in other scriptures, as that of *Psal.* 45. that of planting a vineyard, *Matth.* 21. that of marriage, *Matth.* 22. (which none can deny) is meant of espousing spiritually (See this same allegory of marriage, *Jer.* 3. *Hos.* 2. 3. *Ezek.* 16. *Matth.* 22. *Luke* 14. *2 Cor.* 11. 1. *Rev.* 19. 8.) that must be the scope of this also. For, 1. There cannot be two spiritual marriages, to which these scriptures and this can be applied. 2. Scripture must agree with Scripture, and one more obscure place must be expounded by others more clear ; and therefore, seeing this scope is clear in other scriptures of this nature, we may conclude 'tis the scope here also. That *Psal.* 45. doth agree with the expressions and strain of this Song, is

clear by comparing them ; and that it speaketh of that spiritual marriage betwixt Christ and his Church, is clear by the citations drawn from it, and applied to that end by the Apostle, *Heb. i. 8, 9.*

4. Either this must be its scope, or it must have some other scope, or none at all. To say none at all, is blasphemous : If it be said another scope than this, then it must either be such a scope as agreeth with these other scriptures, or which differeth from them ; but not such as differeth from them, that cannot be said, therefore it must be the same : and so it setteth out Christ's way with his Church, and hers with him, drawing them, as it were, in a map together.

*Object.* If any would argue, that it might better be prophetically applied, as foretelling events in the Church, as some do : For answer, We suppose, it would be hard to make that out to be the scope and intention of the Spirit.

2. It would be more hard to get help from other scriptures, in the application of it to such events, and such times ; and so this would leave it wholly to uncertainty, or mens pleasure, as their invention, and groundless conjectures, would lead them to apply it : (as we fear some good men have taken too much liberty, without any ground but mere conjectures, to wrest the scope of this Song) and beside, such an interpretation would exceedingly spoil believers of that instruction and consolation, which the true scope giveth them ; for then they were not to apply it to themselves, or to the Church, but at such a time, and in such an age : because, if it shall be once fulfilled in others, or, if it be not applicable to them, because they live not in such a time, it will certainly mar their confidence in making any comfortable application of it to themselves.

Beside, these considerations may clear, that, in its scope, it cannot be properly propheticall, of such and such times and events, but dogmaticall and practical, for believers use, in all times and events.

*First.* If the scope and matter of this Song will agree to any one time, or if all of it will agree to believers at any time, then it cannot be propheticall ; for, prophecy supponeth a diversity of time, for divers events, and cannot be said at any one time alike to be fulfilled : But all the subject of this Song may be fulfilled in one believer or other, at any one time ; there are still some enjoying Christ, some deserted, some praying, some suffering, &c. and so of whatever part of it we can think upon, it may be said of one time, as well as of another, that it hath its accomplishment in one believer or other ; and therefore, it is not properly propheticall.

2. If all of it may now be applied to believers, yea, and at any time before the end of the world, may be as well applied, as being then fulfilled, as well as when it was written ; then it is not propheticall, seeing prophecies have their particular accomplishments : But all parts of this Song, even the first

## for opening up the Song.

11

first parts, may now be applied, and will still agree to believers, as properly as it did in *Solomon's* time. Therefore, &c.

3. If all the parts of it were in the same way applicable to, and true, in the cases of believers, then when it was written, even as now, or will be before the end ; then it was not intended to be prophetic, but doctrinal, narrative, and consolatory : But the first is true ; was there any believer in *Solomon's* days, but these commendations, properties, promises, practices, &c. did agree to them, as they do to us ? and was not Christ's way such to them also, as it is to us ?

4. Consider further, if the scope of it be to set out Christ's way to his Church, and hers to him, as is said ; and if, according to this scope, it should be made use of by a believer in any time ; then it is not prophetic, but doctrinal, as hath been said : But the former is true, as is cleared ; Therefore, &c.

5. If it be applicable to believers, according to their several cases ; and if it be the case agreeing with any part of this Song, which grounds the application of it to any party, and not the time when that case is not ; then it is not prophetic, deducing cases by times, but doctrinal, &c. applying directions, warnings, and comforts to believers cases, in whatsoever time.

6. The matter of it is the ordinary cases which are incident to believers in all times ; and what may make it look prophetic like, may be considered in the *Exposition*.

7. If its scope be one and the same with other allegories of this kind, then it is not prophetic, but doctrinal : But the former is true ; Therefore, &c. The truth of both which may appear by what is said, and will further appear in that which followeth.

We leave this then, and come again to the Proposition, *to wit*, That the great scope of this Song is to set out that mutual love and carriage, that is between Christ and his Church. That this Proposition, which is a main one, may be the more clear, we shall take it in *Five* distinct branches.

*First*, It holdeth out (we say) the Church's case, and Christ's care of her, in all her several conditions, and under all dispensations ; such as, (1.) Her sinful infirmities, and failings in duties, *Chap. 1. 6. Chap. 5. 2, 3.* and also, under liveliness in duties, *Chap. 1. 2, 3, 4. and 5. 5.* and almost throughout. (2.) Under crosses, *Chap. 1. 6.* as being a *lilie among thorns*, and hated of the World, *Chap. 2. 2.* and also in prosperity, wherein she is commended as terrible, *Chap. 6. 10.* (3.) As deserted and sick of love, *Chap. 3. 1, 2. and 5. 4, 5.* and again, as enjoying her Beloved, *Chap. 1. 4. Chap. 3. 4, 5.* (4.) As under faithful shepherds, and lively ordinances, *Chap. 1. 4. Chap. 3. 4, 5.* and also, as under carnal watchmen, *Chap. 5. 7.* And in all these, her various conditions, in all ages, are painted forth, before Christ's incarnation, as well

as now, without respect to any particular time or age; for, ceremonial things are not here meddled with, but what was spiritual: beside, the Church then and now is one, as in the next consideration will be cleared. (5.) As in private, dealing with Christ, and longing after him, and praying for him, *Chap. 4. 16. Chap. 8. 1, &c.* almost throughout; and also what she was in publick duties, going to the watchmen, *Chap. 5. 7. and Chap. 3. 3.* and what she was in fellowship with others, *Chap. 5. 8, 9. Chap. 6. 1, 2.* (6.) It sets out believers as more strong, and furnished with a greater measure of grace and knowledge; and also, as more weak in gifts and grace. (7.) And Lastly, It holds forth the same believers, as more and less lively in their conditions.

This book, in its matter, is a comprehensive sum of all these particulars formed in a Song, put together, and drawn as on a broad, for the believers edification; to shew. 1. What should be, and will be their carriage, when it is right with them as to their frame. 2. What are their infirmities, and what they use often to fall into, even they who are believers, that they may be the more watchful. 3. To shew what they may meet with, that they may make for sufferings, and not stumble at them when they come. 4. That the care and love of Christ to them, in reference to all these, may appear, that they may know upon what grounds to comfort themselves in every condition, and may have this Song, as a little magazine, for direction and consolation in every condition.

Therefore this Song is not to be astricted to any particular case or time, and is (even by *Bernard*, *Serm. 1.*) therefore observed to differ from other spiritual songs, in three things; 1. That 'tis penned upon no particular occasion, as others are; such as that of *Moses*, *Exod. 15.* and *Judges 5. &c.* 2. That it is composed by way of conference, between several Parties. 3. That there are in this conference, more parties than two, *Christ*, the *Bride*, *Watchmen*, *Daughters of Jerusalem*, &c. all which do shew its extensiveness, and comprehensiveness, in respect of its subject and use.

2. This Song holdeth forth the Church's, or Bride's conditions, under all her several considerations. We may consider the Bride, or Church, four ways, all of which we will find here; 1. As visible, and visibly professing Christ, and worshipping him in ordinances: in this respect there are *Watchmen* spoken of, a *Mother's house*, *Gardens* of many believers together, and a *Vineyard* let out to Keepers, and a *Mother* having *Children*, (called also *Daughters of Jerusalem*) who are professing believers, and such like, which agree only to the Church, as visible.

2. Consider her as invisible, having true faith in Christ, spiritual union with him, love to him, and real exercise of Graces, &c. Thus Christ is hers, and she his; she is drawn by him, and brought into the Chambers of lively sense and communion: thus she is near him, or absent from him, and such like, which

which only agree to the Church, or saints, as members of the invisible Church, having real (and not only professed) union with Christ; and thus she is distinguished from the mother's children, which are outward professors of the visible Church; and thus the most of the commendations she gets throughout this Song, agree unto her as invisible. Neither can it be thought strange, that both these considerations take place in one and the same Song: For,

1. That distinction of the Church in visible and invisible, is not a distribution of a whole into distinct parts, as, suppose one would divide a heap of chaff and corn, into corn and chaff; but this is a distinct uptaking of the same whole, (to wit, the Church) under two distinct considerations; as, suppose one would consider the foresaid heap, as it is a heap, comprehending both corn and chaff, or, as it is only comprehensive of corn: so the Church, thus distinguished, is but one, considered in whole, as having both renewed and unrenewed in it, and as having renewed only; yet so, as the renewed are a part of the whole, under one consideration, to wit, as they are visible professors; and also, are the invisible Church, being distinctly considered, as they have more than a visible profession: therefore, the similitude being so great and near, it is no marvel they be frequently conjoined in this Song, so as they must be distinguished in respect of these distinct considerations, seeing the visible Church, in its consideration as such, comprehends the invisible militant Church under it, but not contrarily. 2. 'Tis ordinary upon this ground thus to conjoin them in other scriptures; as when an epistle is written to a Church, some things are said of it, and to it, as visible, some things again are peculiarly applicable to believers, who are members of the invisible Church in it; as by looking to these epistles, *Rev. 2. 3.* is clear: all are comprehended in every epistle, yet is the matter diversly to be applied; and these who have ears to hear (that is, are real Members of the invisible Church also) are particularly spoken unto, altho' indefinitely: And why their may not the Church, in both these considerations, be spoken of here in this Song?

2. If we consider either the visible or invisible Church, as whole or catholic, something is spoken to her under that consideration, namely as catholic; so she is said to be one, *Chap. 6. 9.* made up of many, the mother having many daughters, a vineyard intrusted to all the keepers, having some children beloved, others hated, &c. which must be applicable to her, as so considered.

4. If we look to particular members, either, 1. As professors of the visible Church, such as the *Daughters of Jerusalem*, seeking the Beloved with the Bride, and one of them are distinct from another, and from the watchmen; such are the *threescore Queens*, and *four score Concubines*, as distinct from the Church, considered as one. Or 2. As members in particular of the invisible Church; so the Bride is distinguished from other professors, and believers;

lievers; she speaks to them, and they to her, *Chap. 2.* so is one queen and concubine distinguished from another; thus also is the Church considered in general, and in individuals, in their carriage; yea, it serveth much to the scope of edifying believers, that the Church, in these respects, be thus distinctly considered and lookt upon: neither will this be thought strange, if we consider, that the Church however understood, and the particular and individual members thereof (especially of this invisible Church) are of an homogeneous nature; so that what may be said of the whole, may be said of all its parts; and what may be predicated concerning the whole essentially, may be predicated of every part, &c. As, when we consider the whole element of water, it is water; so when we consider a drop, it is also water: and what essential properties do agree to the whole, as such, agrees to every drop of the whole. So is it in the Church; all saints, members of the invisible Church, have the same Spirit, Faith, and Privileges, the same Covenant, Husband, &c. and what thus essentially agrees to one, agrees to all, and what may be said of all, may be said of one: I say, in essentials, because, though there may be many circumstantial and gradual differences, as one believer may be stronger than another, &c. yet that will not mar this oneness and agreement in essentials.

Yet, 3. We say, every thing in this Song is not to be applied to all within the Church, or to the Church under every consideration, in the same manner; what agreeth to the Church as visible, will not, at least in the same manner, agree to her, considered as invisible, & *contra*; nor will every thing which agrees to a believer in one case, agree to all; nay, not to that same believer always. Therefore, there is great need of warriness in application, that the word may be rightly divided, and the diverse cases of the Church and particular believers would be rightly taken up for that end. Every place is not to be applied to all (tho' sometimes a place may be taken up under diverse considerations, as from other scriptures, and the formerly cited epistles, is clear) but what agrees to every one, would be so applied, and solely upon that consideration, and under that notion, as it agrees unto such a person, or such a case.

For helping us in this distinct application, it is necessary that we lay down these following rules:

1. We must weigh the particular scope of such a place of scripture, if it speak something concerning a believer in particular, or the Church in general; if it set out some outward or some inward thing concerning them.

2. We would consider the matter spoken to, and see how it agreeth, whether to the Church under one consideration, or under another; and if the matter predicated of her, or attributed to her, will agree to her as visible, or as invisible only, for so it is to be applied; if to the whole Church, or if also to all its members, and every particular believer; for so it is to be understood.

3. We

3. We would see, how the same matter is applied in other songs and scriptures, and it will be safe for us to follow the same way of application here.

4. We would consider, what the particular circumstances, that may be observed in such a particular scripture, will help in finding out the sense; as who speaketh, to whom, in what frame, on what occasion, &c.

Yet, *Fourthly*, We say, that this Song doth most generally agree, and is especially applicable to the cases of particular believers: Because,

1. The scope is not so much to speak to all collectively, as distributively to hold forth the several cases, that all of them, at all times, are subject unto; for altho' every place do not point out the case of the Church in general, or her duty, yet, we conceive, it is still, in every part, pertinent to some one believer, or other: such places must therefore be understood distributively.

2. The nature and strain of the most of those things mentioned in this Song, generally, will agree best (if not only) to particular believers; As to love Christ, to seek him, to be commended so by him, to be out of one case into another, pursuing after him from one duty to another: which indeed shews the way of the Church in general, but so as considered in the exercises of her individual members, and in the intercourse of communion, which useth to be betwixt Christ and them; and so agreeth to the Church, only in respect of particular believers.

3. There is a plurality of parties speaking, differenced not only from carnal professors, but from one another, who are commending the Bride, and so loving her and Christ also; which says, that the several parts of this Song must especially be distributively considered of believers severally.

4. There is no time we can conceive all believers to be in the like case, so that one case or word will not suit them all; as to be *sick of love*, to have *his right hand under her head*, &c. Something then must agree to one, something to another, and both also at different times to the same person: And therefore we must consider this Song, as speaking distributively the Church's condition, to be applied according to the several cases of the saints, and according to their several conditions; something as spoken to one, and something to another.

5. The putting of these exercises in a Song, as it were, to be learned and sung by particular believers (as a little compend, both of what concerns their faith and manners) was certainly for helping their memories, and furthering their consolation; which would be much impaired, if, in singing of it, particular believers might not suck their own consolation in particular from Christ's words unto them: And what can hinder, but a believer may say, *I am his, and he is mine*, and that these, and other places applicable to them, may not be so applied, seeing their comfort and edification is the scope of this Song?

5. The last branch of the Proposition is, That this Song holdeth forth the same love and care in Christ to his Church, and the same exercises and duties of believers, under figurative terms, which are plainly and properly holden forth in other scriptures, which are not figurative, such as are in the Gospel, in the *Psalms*, &c. There are now new, strange, or uncouth cases here, but believers ordinary cases; there is no uncouth way of Christ's here, but what he useth to his Church: 'Tis often the folly and vanity of mens minds, that, when expressions of scripture look somewhat strange like, they suppose still some uncouth and strange thing to be there, and therefore lothe that which is plain. 'Tis true, the cases mentioned here are most spiritual, having love often drawn in its most bright and lively colours; yet, for substance, the exercises are the same, which in other plain scriptures are otherwise expressed; for it must express the same cases, or, we must say, it expresseth something different from them, not incident ordinarily to believers, and not mentioned any where in scripture; which to affirm, were both dangerous and absurd: Beside, Christ being still the same in his way with believers, and they having still the same Spirit, and being still under the same covenant, &c. we can conceive no other thing here, but what he hath expressed concerning himself and them, other-where in scripture. And certainly, the scope of this Song is rather, in a sweet way, to compact together the ordinary cases of believers, and their consolations, for their edification, than to pitch on strange things, or make new cases, which would not be so profitable unto them, and would wrong and enervate the great intent of this Song.

*We proceed now, and shall draw some Conclusions from these Propositions.*

*First Conclusion.* We may then warrantably read, and expone this Song; it being scripture, it must be edifying, and ought to be made use of. 'Tis true, this and some other scriptures, were of old restrained by the *Jews* from the younger sort, that none should read them, but these who were at thirty years of age: *Origen* marks four pieces of holy scripture, thus restrained by them; the history of the creation, *Genes.* 1. the description of God's appearance, *Ezek.* 1. and of his temple, *Chap.* 40. &c. and especially this Song; because the matters in them were so sublime, that there needed more than ordinary humility and experience in those who should meddle with them. This indeed faith, men ought to be sober, and with holy fear search these scriptures: but that restraint (if peremptory) was unwarrantable, seeing the Lord hath put none such on his people, as to any portion of sacred scripture. And tho' this Song be obscurer than many other scriptures, yet, generally, the reading of it, and hearing of it, will affect; and as to the composing of the spirit, edify as much as other more plain scriptures: which faith, 'tis to be enquired into, that the meaning being found out, the profit reaped thereby may be the more distinct and apparent.

2. *Conclus.* We gather from what hath been said, that seeing this Song may be expounded, Then doctrines for grounding our faith, and directing our practice, may warrantably be drawn from it, for the edification of God's people, seeing it is scripture; and altho' it be allegorick, it is in a special way useful for edification, and may as bread be broken to the children: 'tis not only consistent with the nature of plain scriptures, but also of allegories, that they be thus extended in their use. We shall clear this conclusion, in these three,

*First,* There may be doctrines drawn from this Song, in reference to all cases that are incident to a believer; As, 1. In reference to the case of the Church, in all its considerations, visible or invisible, catholick or particular. And, 2. In reference to the more private and personal cases of believers, doctrines instructing them both in faith and manners, &c. For the doctrines must rise as extensively as their scope and matter; and these are of a great reach and extent, as formerly hath been said: Such doctrines then, when handled in this Song, would not be thought strange, nor unsuitable to it; but the broader they arise, the Spirit's wisdom and contrivance in this Song will be the more wonderful and evident.

*Secondly,* These doctrines must not be taken from the words properly, but allegorically understood, according to the intention of the Spirit in them; even as from parables, and other clearer allegories and figures in scripture, it useth to be done.

*Thirdly,* These doctrines so drawn, when rightly concluded from the text and scope, are solid and sure, useful for faith and manners, as doctrines, drawn from other places of scripture, are: For, 1. 'Tis certain, that many scriptures are allegorically set down; and, is their authority therefore any way less than that of other scriptures? And if their authority be such in themselves, as is the authority of other scriptures; then their exposition, and doctrines drawn from them, must be solid and useful, as these that are drawn from other scriptures: Or, 2. We must say, there is no use of such scriptures, which were blasphemous; and if they be useful, there may be solid uses drawn from them, as from other scriptures. 3. Our Lord useth parables and allegories often in the Gospel, and that in things relating both to faith and manners; which faith, the use of them is solid and safe, when they are rightly understood and applied.

All the difficulty is in the right understanding of them: and because allegories are frequent in scripture, and this Song is wholly made up of allegories; therefore, both for removing prejudices, and facilitating our way, I shall speak something to these three. 1. We shall shew what an allegorick exposition, or rather the exposition of an allegory, is. 2. When it is necessary to understand a scripture allegorically. 3. How to walk in attaining the solid meaning, or how to know if such a thing be the meaning of an allegorick scripture.

For the *First*, There is a great difference betwixt an allegorick exposition of scripture, and an exposition of allegorick scripture: The first is that which many fathers and school-men fail in; that is, when they allegorize plain scriptures and histories, seeking to draw out some secret meaning, other than appeareth in the words; and so will fasten many senses upon one scripture. This is indeed unsafe, and is justly reprovab; for this maketh clear scripture dark, and obtrudeth meanings on the Words, never intended by the Spirit; As, suppose one speaking of *Goliath's* combat and *David's*, should pass by the letter, and expound *Goliath* to be the flesh, or the devil, and *David* to be the Spirit, or Christ: Such expositions may have some pleasantness, but often little solidity; and such, who most commonly thus interpret scripture, often fall in errors. As guilty of this fault, *Origen* is generally complained of, tho' moe also be guilty, as might be cleared by many instances.

2dly, And exposition of an allegorick scripture, is, the opening and expounding of some dark scripture (wherein the mind of the Spirit is couched and hid under figures and allegories) making it plain and edifying, by bringing out the sense according to the meaning of the Spirit in the place, tho' at first it seemed to bear out no such thing: So, *Matth. 13.* Christ expoundeth that parable or allegory (for, tho' Rhetoricians make a difference between similitudes, or parables, and allegories; yet, in Divinity, there is none, but that allegories are more large and continued) calling the *Seed*, the *Word*; the *Sower*, the *Son of man*, &c. This way of expounding such dark scriptures, is both useful and necessary, and was often used as edifying by our Lord to his disciples. Now, 'tis this we speak of, which teacheth how to draw plain doctrines out of allegories, and not to draw allegories out of plain histories or doctrines.

2. It may be asked then, When are we to account a place of scripture allegorick, and are we to seek out some other meaning than what at first appeareth? *Ans.*

1. When the literal proper meaning looketh absurd like, or is empty, and nothing to edification; as when it is said, we must eat Christ's flesh, whereby believing is expressed: and so, these scriptures that do command to *pluck out the right eye, cut off the right hand, take up our cross, &c.* All which, if literally understood, were absurd and ridiculous; and therefore, the mistaking such scriptures hath occasioned many errors, as that of the *Anthropomorphites*, attributing members, to wit, head, hands, feet, &c. to God; and passions, yea, infirmities, as anger, repenting, &c. because the scripture speaking of God, after the manner of men, doth allegorically attribute to him, eyes, hands, wrath, &c.

2. These places of scripture are to be accounted allegorick, which reach not the scope of edification, intended by them if literally understood; as when  
Christ

Christ hath spoken of *sowing*, the disciples thought, that some more was intended than at first appeared ; for his aim could not be to discourse of husbandry to them : So gathers the Apostle an allegory from these words, *Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox, that treadeth out the corn* ; and so also, that and the like precepts, discharging the Jews *the sowing their fields with diverse grains*, &c. Which tho' they be not wholly allegorick, but have in the letter their own truth, yet somewhat in these beyond what appears, was aimed at by the Spirit ; for, saith the Apostle, *Doth God care for oxen* ? that is, that precept hath a further scope, 1 Cor. 9. 9, 10.

3. When a literal sense would obtrude some falsity on the scripture, then such a scripture is to be understood allegorically ; as when Christ said, *Destroy this temple, and I will build it up in three days* ; it is not to be understood of the material house, or Jewish temple, because then Christ's word would not have had its accomplishment ; but allegorically of his body : So, when Christ saith, *Except a man eat his flesh, he shall not live*, John 6. 53. it cannot be understood literally, seeing all who have obtained life, did never eat his flesh in a carnal bodily way.

4. Any scripture is to be accounted allegorical, when the literal sense agreeth not with other scriptures, and is not repugnant to the analogy of faith, or rules of right manners ; As, when we are commanded to heap coals of fire upon the head of our enemy. Now, it were against the command of not avenging our selves, if literally and properly understood ; it must therefore signify some other thing.

5. When a literal sense answereth not the present scope of the speaker, and the speaker would be thought impertinent, if his words were properly taken, then it would seem necessary to expound it as an allegory : So, *Matth. 3. 10.* when John is pressing repentance, he saith, *The ax is laid to the root of the tree*, &c. and that parable of Christ's, *Luke 13. 7.* speaking of the husbandman that spared his tree three years. If these places were only properly understood, they would not inforce repentance, which is aimed at ; they must therefore be expounded, as having something more in them, of a deeper reach, which may conduce to that scope.

And seeing, according to these rules, all the absurdities mentioned would follow, if this Song were literally and properly expounded ; it must therefore be taken allegorically, and the doctrines must be drawn from its inside, or scope, when the vail of the allegory is laid by.

But, *Thirdly*, Because 'tis dangerous to leave men to coin what expositions they please of such scriptures, therefore, as upon the one hand, 'tis absurd to cast all doctrines from them, as unsolid ; so, upon the other hand, we would see what may fix us in a solid exposition, and so what may be esteemed a well-grounded doctrine, drawn from such an allegory.

I shall, in order to our help in this, name five rules, whereof the last is safest.

1. Some allegories at the first view seem plain, and imprint their meaning on these that have the least capacity, that it may be known, at least, what in general they aim at; and therefore, such are left frequently in scripture unexpounded, and are used to press most obvious truths, such is that of *John*, *Matth.* 3. 10. *The ax is laid to the root of the tree; and he hath his fan in his hand, &c.* the meaning whereof is at first obvious to be a peremptory certification, pressing present repentance: So is the parable of the marriage, *Matth.* 22. 1. which at first view appears to be understood of espousing believers to Christ as their husband; And so Christ's command to *take up the cross, &c.* These, as to their meaning, are obvious; and we think such is this Song in its general series: the very reading of it seems to imprint, that Christ and his people must be taken up as the parties, and the love here spoken of, must be such as is betwixt them; and tho' particular expressions be dark, thus far it is obvious.

2. The meaning of an allegory may be gathered from the common use of such phrases and expressions, in our common use; So *kissing* and *embracing, &c.* signify love, and are expressions of mutual affection. In an allegory, then, these, and such like, are to express analogically some spiritual thing, answerable in our spiritual life to such things in our bodily life; thus they express spiritual love, and the sense of it: Thus eyes, hands, feet, &c. applied to God, denote some singular property in him; if allegorically applied to believers, they denote some qualification of the new man, that hath some analogy and resemblance to these, as knowledge, activity, patience, &c. because by our eye we see, by our hand we work, and by our feet we walk and travel, &c. Thus are they transferred, to hold out some other thing than appeareth at first from the words; and the work of the interpreter is to bring out the scope and matter in plain expressions, that it may look like the thing it is, and which is aimed at as the scope.

3. 'Tis helpful in expounding of allegories, to know how such phrases are expounded in other places; as when some things are spoken of *David*, that cannot literally agree to *David*, then see who is meant, in other places of scripture, by him. If it cannot be known what is meant by a marriage-tie here, seeing it can be no humane thing, see what other spiritual marriage is spoken of in any other place of scripture, and who are the parties, and this is to be expounded by that.

4. Being to interpret any allegorical place of scripture, we would see, not only to the scope of all scripture, and the analogy of faith in general, but to the scope of the Spirit in that place: As for example, If we would understand what is intended by the parable of the *Prodigal*, we would first  
con-

consider the scope, which is to shew God's ready welcoming of a sinner, and then level the exposition, as serving to illustrate that scope. So we would consider what is the Bride's scope, *Chap. 5. 10.* and 'tis to describe Christ; and, *Chap. 7. 1.* we would consider what is the Bridegroom's scope, and 'tis to describe her: So then it agrees with the scope, to open these places, and apply them to what is commendable in him, and her. And thus the exposition, and doctrines from it, do not only suit with the analogy of faith, and are not contrary to sound doctrine; but also suit with the intention of the Spirit there, and are agreeable to it: For the Holy Ghost, under general commendations, may include all particulars, which may serve to make out the general; and so, when the scope is to hold Christ out as all desires, then whatever makes him appear desirable, and standeth with the analogy of the expression, may well stand with that scope. This is sure, especially when negatively 'tis inferred; that is, when such a scope necessarily inferreth such a doctrine, and when that scope could not be attained, if such a doctrine were not supposed: As when in general, Christ and his Church are holden out to stand in a near relation together, and so to carry one towards each other, as being under such a Relation; this will necessarily infer a covenant, and an union by faith upon the grounds of it, and some evidencing of the proofs of Christ's love, &c. because without these that relation could never have been, nor can it without them be understood by us.

5. The last rule, which we call most sure, is this, Then we may safely conclude, that we have reached the true meaning of an allegorical scripture, when, from the scripture, in the same, or other places, agreeing with the scope of the present allegory, we gather in plain expressions what is meant thereby, or what was intended by the Spirit in such an allegorical expression; as when Christ clears the parable of the Sower, he calleth the seed the word, &c. which makes the meaning clear, and above question; Or, when a plain expression is mixed in with the allegory; So that expression, *Chap. 1. 1. Let him kiss me*, &c. in the words following is expounded by a more plain expression, to wit, *thy loves are better*, &c. Hence we solidly gather that by kisses are meant love: and this doctrine is sure, Christ's love is vehemently desired by the Bride. These ways for finding out what is the sense of such scriptures, are safe; and therefore, that saying, symbolick scriptures are not argumentative, is to be understood with a limitation, to wit, except in so far as the scope and meaning of the Spirit is known, and in so far as the allegory, or the several parts thereof, agreeth with, and conduceth to the clearing and making up of the known scope.

All these ways going together, and taken along with us, we may, through God's blessing, undertake the opening of this Song, and draw doctrines from it, so expounded, not only agreeable to other scriptures, and the analogy of faith,

faith, but also as agreeable to the scope of this Song; yea, even the scope of such a portion of it, though possibly every expression in its meaning, be not so fully reached; which is not the thing we dare promise, but humbly to essay the making of it in some measure clear, relishing, amiable, and comfortable to God's people. And so we leave this conclusion.

The 3d *Conclus.* and last is, That the doctrines which this Song yieldeth for all conditions, and which for believers use are to be drawn from it, are the same plain, solid, spiritual truths, which are drawn from other scriptures, wherein Christ's love to his Church and people, and their exercises, are set down: and if in its exposition it resolve in the same meaning with other scriptures, then must also the doctrines be the same; and therefore such doctrines concerning faith and manners, for believers direction in all cases, as ariseth from the gospel, and other plain scriptures, psalms and histories, may be solidly drawn from this Song: and such, when they are drawn, are solid, (being according to the foresaid general rules) and weight is to be laid on them, in a christian walk. We shall therefore endeavour to make this out, that when the doctrine of faith, repentance, diligence, &c. and such other doctrines as are in the gospel, concerning the covenant, or Christ, are spoken of, ye may not think it strange, nor unsuitable to this Song. And therefore we say,

1. If the doctrines be suitable to the scope and matter contained in this Song, then they are sure and solid, and weight is to be laid upon them: but the doctrines concerning Christ's love to, and care of, his Church, and concerning her exercising of faith, repentance, &c. are suitable to the scope, and agreeable to the matter of it. Or thus, If the scope and matter of this Song do agree with the gospel (I call the gospel what in the New Testament is more fully holden forth and more clearly) in the scope and matter of it; then must the doctrines which arise from it, be the same with these that rise from the gospel: but the first is true, as is formerly cleared, therefore must this last be so also. And what is the scope of the gospel, but to set forth Christ's love to his Church? to shew her duty, &c. And is not that same the scope here also? Only what is preceptively, or doctrinally delivered there, is here as it were acted in a sort of comedy, and compiled in a song, but still for the same end.

2. If the same allegories, in other places of scripture, will bear solid doctrines concerning Christ, his covenant, faith, &c. even such as are in plain scriptures; then must this Song do the like, seeing it is the word of God, tending to the same scope with these. But it is clear, *Isa.* 5. 2. *Jer.* 3. *Matth.* 22. *Rev.* 19. 7. that the same allegories of vineyards, fruits and marriage, &c. are used, and to the same scope with this, and are made use of to yield solid doctrines concerning faith, fruitfulness, and other doctrines belonging to a

be-

believer's faith and practice: therefore it must be so here; for tho' this Song be larger, and is made up of moe allegories together, that will not alter the nature of it, or of the doctrines which must be drawn from it.

3. If we compare this Song with the 45 Psalm, it cannot be denied, 1. but that Psalm and this Song are to one scope, and of one stile or strain, in prosecuting that scope; 'tis a Song of love for the King, and a spiritual marriage is the subject thereof, as is clear from the very reading of it. 2. It cannot be denied, but that solid proofs and doctrines, concerning many points of faith and practice, which are in other plain scriptures, are, and may be warrantably drawn from it, even as if it were plain gospel: therefore must the doctrines be such which arise from this Song also; for that psalm is used, even by the apostle, *Heb. 1. 8, 9.* to confirm the great truths of the gospel.

4. If this whole Song be one piece, and of one nature, driving all along the same general scope, then such doctrines, as the places in it, which are clear, do yield; such, I say, must be contained (if we could discern them) in these places of it which are most obscure: but what is most plain in this Song, speaks out such plain doctrines, experiences, &c. therefore what is more obscure, may be resolved in such also: for we may best know what kind of doctrines floweth from what is obscure, by the places that are more clear, seeing God in the most dark scriptures ordinarily hath insert some plain passages, or given some hints of his mind, to be as a key for opening all the rest. Now, if we will, for instance, consider some such places as these, *My beloved is mine, &c. I called, but he gave me no answer,* they yield plain doctrines, as other plain scriptures do: and therefore, seeing it is one continued Song, and each of these dark and plain places answer one another, to continue the series of the discourse upon the same subject, we may know by what is plain, how to understand what is couched within that which is more dark.

5. As one piece of the allegory is to be resolved, so by proportion must all the rest, there being one thread and scope: now, that some pieces of the allegory may be expounded in clear doctrines, concerning Christ and his Church, may be gathered from paralleling some parts of it with other scriptures; as if we compare that excellent description of Christ, *Chap. 5. 10.* with that which *John* sets down, *Rev. 1. 13.* we will see a great resemblance betwixt the two (if this last have not respect unto the former) especially in that which is spoken anent his feet, and legs, and his countenance: But it is certain, that description, *Rev. 1. 13.* is given him with a purpose to describe him, and to set out the several attributes and excellent qualities he is furnished with; as Omniscience by his eyes, Justice by his legs, walking surely; Omnipotence by his arms, &c. which are particularly so applied in the epistles to the seven Churches, *Chap. 2. and 3.* and afterward. If then there, by the Spirit's warrant, we may draw from Christ's being said to have eyes,

eyes, that he is omniscient (and so in other properties) may we not also think, that seeing 'tis the same Spirit that speaks here, in the particular description that is given of Christ and the Bride in their several parts, that these same particular properties may be aimed at? and may we not make use of such interpretations elsewhere given, for our help in the like particulars, and so also in other things?

6. Thus we argue, Either this Song is so to be resolved, as hath been said, and such doctrines are to be drawn from it, as arise from the Gospel, for expressing the way of believers with Christ, and his with them; Or then, 1. There are no doctrines to be drawn from it, but this Song is a mere compliment, and but ignorantly, with holy blind affection, to be sung; which is absurd: Or, 2. The doctrines are but to be guessed at, and so the truth of them is only conjectural; which will come near the former absurdity, and spoil the believer of any solid edification he could have from it: Or, 3. It must contain such a kind of love, such cases and doctrines concerning Christ and believers, which are different from the Gospel, and the cases of saints plainly recorded elsewhere; now, this would necessitate an uncertainty of its meaning, and hazard the coining of two ways of Christ's dealing with his people, as also, of theirs with him, two unions, two marriages, &c. Or, 4. It must contain the same doctrines concerning faith, Christ, the covenant, the Church, &c. which are contained in other scriptures, and in the Gospel; which was the thing to be proven.

We have been the larger on this, to obviate two extremes, that men are given to follow, in reference to this Song. 1. Some lothing plain truths, which are plainly delivered in scriptures properly to be taken; and because this in expression and strain differeth, they conclude there must be some uncouth, strange and odd thing here. It is true, if we look to the degree of warm affections that breathe forth here, we may conceive that there is something odd and singular in this Song: But, as to the kind of doctrine here delivered, there is nothing new; and to imagine the contrary, were as if a man supposed, there behoved to be some strange liquor, or meat in curious-like glasses, and dishes, because the master of an house might use variety of vessels, for the delectation of the feasters, yet still giving the same solid food and drink, tho' diversly prepared; Or, as if a man would suppose, *Paul* and *Barnabas*, Christ our Lord, and *John*, did preach different Gospels, because they were of different gifts, and had a different manner of expression. 2. On the other hand, some are ready to cast at this book as useless, because they see not plain truths at the first in it, and possibly think all endeavours to expound it, or draw doctrines from it, but a guessing; and are ready to offend, when they meet with nothing but some such truths as are obvious in some other scriptures. This wrongs the worth, and divine authority of this scripture

ture also ; and tho' many (and we among others) may misapply some things in this Song, yet to say they cannot be rightly applied, or that such doctrines as we have before mentioned, are not native to it, is too precipitant, to say no more.

For further clearing and confirming of these propositions and conclusions, we shall answer some objections or questions which may be proposed concerning what is said.

*First*, It may be objected, If allegorick scriptures be so to be expounded, and such doctrines to be drawn from them ; then, why are such scriptures set down under such figurative expressions ? Might they not be better in plain words ? or might not such plain scriptures be rather expounded, which bear such doctrines with less difficulty ?

*Ans.* If this were urged, it would not only reflect on this Song, but on many places of scripture, and also on the expounding of such scriptures ; yea, it would reflect on the wisdom of the Spirit, and his sovereignty, who may choose what way he pleases, to express his mind to his people ; and whatever way he take to do this, sure, it is still the best, and it may warrant us to acquiesce in the way he hath taken to speak his mind, that it is he that speaks : Yet there may be good ends given of this his way, or weighty reasons (even for our behoof) why he speaks to his people in such terms and language ; As, 1. Here he putteth all the conditions of a believer together, as in one map, which are more sparsely, and, as it were, here and there, to be found elsewhere through the scriptures ; we have them here compend-ed together, in a sort of spiritual dependence one upon another, and in a connexion one with another. And they are put in a Song, to make them the more sweet and lovely ; and under such poetical and figurative expressions, as best agreeth with the nature of songs and poetical writings, that so believers may have them together, and may sing them together, for the help of their memory, and upstirring of their affections.

2. These figures and similitudes have their own use, to make us the better take up and understand the spiritual things which are represented by them ; when, in a manner, he condescends to illustrate them by similitudes, and so to teach (as it were) to our senses, things which are not otherwise so obvious : for which cause, Christ often taught by parables the greatest mysteries of the gospel.

3. Thus not only the judgment is informed, but it serveth the more to work on our affections, both to convince us of, and to deter us from what is ill, when it is proposed indifferently in an allegory, as *Nathan* in his parable to *David* did : And also, it conduceth the more to gain our affections to love such things as are here set out ; wherefore, even Heaven itself is so described from similitudes of such things as are in account with men, *Rev.* 21. 22. And

Christ's love becomes thus more comfortable, and our relation to him the more kindly-like, when 'tis illustrate by Marriage, and the kindly expressions of a Husband and Wife ; for this also, God is compared to a Father, and his pity to a father's pity to children, to make it the more sensible and comfortable.

4. Thus also any knowledge that is attained, or any impression that is made, is the better fixed and kept : similitudes are often retained, when plain truths are forgotten, as we may see in experience ; yea, the retaining of the similitude in the memory, doth not only keep the words in mind, but helps to some acquaintance with the thing which is signified, and furthereth us in understanding the manner how such and such things, the Lord doth to his people, are brought about.

5. Thus both the wisdom and care of God and his Spirit appeareth, who taketh divers ways to commend his truth unto men, and to gain them to the love of it, that they who will not be affected with plain truth, he may, by more taking expressions, commend unto them the same thing ; which is the reason why he hath given divers gifts and ways of holding forth his truth unto ministers ; some have one way, like sons of thunder ; some another, like sons of consolation ; and yet all to carry on the same end, that the one may be helpful unto the other. Indeed, if God had delivered his truth only in obscure terms, the objection might seem to have some weight ; but when he doth it both in plain and obscure ways, this is his condescendency and wisdom, by all means seeking to gain some.

6. Thus also the Lord removeth occasion of lothing from his word, by putting it in some lovely artifice, in the manner of its delivery ; and also, he doth hereby provoke his people to more diligence, in searching after the meaning of it ; it being often our way to esteem least of what is most obvious, and most of that which is by some pains attained.

7. Thus also the Lord maketh the study of his word delectable, when both the judgment and affections are jointly wrought upon ; and to shew that all the believer's conditions may be matter of a sweet song to him ; whereas some things, if plainly laid down, would not be so cheerfully digested : Thus he maketh the saddest matter sweet, by his manner of proposing it.

8. Also the Lord useth to keep the Songs, and spiritual allowance of his own, somewhat veiled from the rest of the world ; for *they have meat to eat the world knoweth not of*, that believers may see, and feed sweetly, where they discern nothing ; and that they, having this commented on by experience betwixt him and them, may sing that song, which none other in the world can learn, as the hundred and forty four thousand do, *Rev. 14. 1.* for thus 'tis said, *Matth. 13. 9, 10, 11, &c.* that Christ spake in parables, that not only he might condescend to the weakness of his own, so as they might bear it, *Mark 4. 33, 34.* but also, that others, *seeing might see, and not perceive.*

Often

Often that same way which his own gets good of, proveth a stumbling to others, through their own corruption.

9. There may be also something of God's design here, to try the humility and sincerity of his people, if they will stoop to every way he useth, because 'tis his; and if they will love the word, not as so, or so proposed, but as it cometh from him, and is his, and as such humbly receive it, as being that which (tho' it seem to others foolishness, yet) *makes them wise unto salvation*. The mockers taunted *Ezekiel's* message, under this notion, that he spake parables, *Ezek. 20. 49.* but *Zech. 11. 10, 11.* when the prophet broke the two staves, (which was a dark and mysterious-like action) the poor of the flock waited on him, when (as 'tis like) others stumbled also. By all which, we may see, why the Lord hath so compacted together plain useful doctrines, under such expressions, in this Song; and also, why our undertaking to open it, may be well constructed, even tho' these same truths may elsewhere as clearly arise; yet these truths are here in such a way connected together, and so not only proposed, but also commended to us, as will not any where else be found.

*Obj. 2d.* If any say, The raising of such Gospel-doctrines makes this Song look more like the Gospel of the New Testament, than a Song of the Old.

*Ans. 1.* Is it the worse, that it look like the Gospel? Or, are not such doctrines (if they follow from it) the better and more comfortable? Certainly there is no doctrine, more edifying and comfortable to believers, and more like, or more becoming Christ's way with believers, or theirs with him (which is the scope and subject of this Song) than Gospel-doctrines are. High soaring words of vanity, and mysteries having nothing but an empty sound, are much more unlike this spiritual Song, than these. 2. If it set out Christ's way to believers, even under the Old Testament, and believer's way of keeping communion with God even then; is not that the same Gospel-way which we have now? Their faith and communion with God stood not in the outward ceremonies, which were typical; but in the exercise of inward graces, faith, love, &c. which are the same now as then: Was not Christ the same to them as to us? Had they not the same Spirit, Covenant, &c. and so the cases and experiences of, or incident to believers then, are also applicable to us now? That Christ was then to come, and hath now suffered, and that the way of revealing him then, was some way different from that we have now, will not make another Gospel, Covenant, Faith, yea, nor Church; we being grafted in that same Stock which they once grew upon, and being, by faith, heirs of the same promises, which sometime they possessed.

*Obj. 3d.* If any should yet doubt, if *Solomon* knew or intended such doctrines as these, and that therefore they cannot be well digested, if drawn from this Song, beyond his mind and meaning. 1 *Answer, 1.* Our great purpose is to know what the Spirit intended, and not what *Solomon* understood: and if this

be the Spirit's intention, to set out Christ's way with his Church, then such doctrines as agree therewith, must be agreeable to his meaning. 2. Yea, suppose *Solomon* and other prophets should be ignorant, in a great measure, of the meaning of such things as the Spirit foretold by them (as it is not impossible in some extraordinary things, especially when their knowledge in these was not essential to the truth of their prophecy; for they might have a kind of nescience in the particulars, tho' they were sure the things they delivered were, in the complex prophecy, God's word) yet, will any say, that we should limit the words spoken by them, to their understanding of them? If so, by what rule would we know, if, or how they did understand them?

3. Therefore we say, It was with *Solomon* here, as with other prophets, (as *Isaiah*, and others) who spake many of the Gospel-truths, which in particular they might not so fully know, as we do now, when these prophecies are fulfilled; yet was it never doubted, but the most deep mysteries of the Gospel were contained in their prophecies.

Yet, 4. We say, There is no ground to think, but *Solomon* knew much of the mind of the Spirit in this Song, yea, more than many learned men now a-days. For, 1<sup>st</sup>, He was not only a believer, but one eminent for gifts and knowledge: and none will say but he was so for divine knowledge, as well as humane; as his books, particularly, *Prov.* 4, 8, 9 chapters, in his description of Christ, the substantial Wisdom of the Father, &c. do shew. And can it be thought, he wrote this book, without any sense of what he wrote? 2<sup>dly</sup>, Can it be thought, but he lavelled what he wrote here at a scope, and that afterward himself made use of it, for his edification and comfort? which could not be done, if he had not understood the most of these Gospel-mysteries, upon which all this sweet conference betwixt Christ and believers is founded. 3<sup>dly</sup>, His writing in such terms shews, that the words were not ignorantly fallen upon; but he, having knowledge of all herbs, spices, &c. and how to apply them to spiritual things, pitched upon these as the most pertinent similitudes; which are therefore, by the special wisdom of the Spirit, made use of in this Song, as in other his writings: Yea, certainly his knowledge, how spiritual mysteries are couched up in these similitudes, and represented by them, was beyond what we can reach unto now; and therefore we dare not insist, or be peremptory in the particular application of these similitudes. 4<sup>thly</sup>, The subject of this Song not being prophetic, but narrative and doctrinal, containing such exercises as might be, and certainly were found in believers, even then, and such dispensations as they used to meet with, will any say he was a stranger unto them, seeing there was access to know these much better than prophecies of things which were to come? Yea, 5<sup>thly</sup>, Is there any thing here, but what in other scriptures of the Old Testament (and especially Songs and Psalms) is to be found, where the cases and ex-

exercises of God's people are set down? And it needs not be thought strange, if we equal him in knowledge with others of his time, or before him; and that he sets down in a more artificial manner, according to his measure of gifts, that which others set down in more plain terms, yet both by the same Spirit.

We may then confidently hazard to draw the same doctrines concerning Christ, the Gospel, Church, &c. from it, that are to be found in other more clear and plain scriptures. One of the Fathers (*Athanas. in Synops.*) comparing this Song with other scriptures of the Old Testament, says, *It is as John Baptist among the Prophets: Other scriptures speak of Christ as coming, (saith he) and afar off; this speaks of him, and to him, as already com<sup>d</sup>, and near hand:* And indeed it is so; for so, even then, he was sometimes very familiar and present both to the faith and sense of his people, as well as now. Thus also, even *Origen* (tho' in plain scriptures too luxuriant, yet in this he) seems to own this same scope. Thus also *Zanch.* in *Eph. 5.* makes it a compend and copy of the spiritual marriage with Christ. And *Bodius* in *Eph.* pag. 114. says, *'Tis ipsius fidei, & religionis christiana, medulla.*

If it be said, if we interpret this Song after this manner, then all the observations will run upon believers cases only; which would seem to say, that no doctrines may be drawn from it, for the edification of these who are yet unrenewed; and what use can it then be of, to them, who yet are the greater part in the Church?

1 *Ans.* The Gospel hath doctrines suitable to all within the Church; and this Song, being in substance Christ's way with his Church, must also contain doctrines useful for all within the same.

2. In this Song the Church is not only considered as invisible, and unite by true faith to Christ; but also as visible, and as under external ordinances, as hath been said: and, in that respect, it furnishes doctrines fit for all.

3. This Song will furnish doctrines useful for these, as other parables or allegories of that kind do, which Christ used often even for the edification of such.

4. Doctrines from all places of scripture may be raised by analogy; as from such places, where God holdeth forth the way he useth with his own, when they have wronged him by sin, which is to humble them, and bring them to repentance; ere they see his face again, sin becomes bitter even to them: From such places, I say, we may gather by proportion, that God's way with unrenewed sinners, whom he minds to bring to peace and friendship with himself, is to humble them, and make sin bitter to them, seeing the recovering of peace, and the first founding of peace, as to this, is brought about after the same manner.

5. From such places, as speak directly Christ's special love to believers, there may be drawn good uses and applications to others; partly, to engage them to him, who so loves his own; partly, to terrify these who are

not

not his, by their being debarred from any right to such excellent privileges

6. Where the Bride's carriage is commendable, 'tis a copy and pattern to all, even as examples and precepts are ordinarily given in common to all, and serve to direct every one in what they should aim at, and also to convince for what they are short of: The duties she is taken up with, being moral, her example in these must lay an universal obligation upon all; and in such things wherein she falleth through infirmity, her carriage serveth well to deter all from these evils.

In the *last* place, for better understanding of the subject of this Song, we would take alongst with us, *First*, Some Observations. *Secondly*, Some Rules.

(1.) The subject thereof is to hold forth the mutual and interchangeable exercise and out-lettings of love, as well betwixt Christ and particular believers, as betwixt him and the Church: As also, his various dispensations to the Bride, her divers conditions and tempers, and both his and her carriage under them, and her out-gates.

(2.) The manner how this sweet subject is set down, is by way of dialogue, in several conferences, after a dramattick way (as it is called) because thus the mutual love of these parties is best expressed: In which there are, 1. The principal parties in the discourse; 2. Others, as friends or attendants waiting on. In the Gospel, *John* 3. 28, 29. there are mentioned the *Bridegroom*, and his *Friends*, and the *Bride*: And *Children of the marriage-chamber* are spoken of, *Matth.* 9. 15. by which are understood *Virgins* and *Companions*, that attend her, and also go forth to wait on him; which are of two sorts, some *wise*, being really so, some *foolish*, being wise in profession only, *Matth.* 25. 1, 2. There is also mention made of a *Mother*, *Gal.* 4. 26. which hath two sorts of children, some born after the *flesh*, and but children as it were of the *bond-woman*; others born after the *Spirit*, and true members of the Church invisible: The former persecutes the latter; and of both kinds of children, are some of all ranks, amongst Priests, Apostles, Ministers, &c.

We will find all these parties in this Song, acting their several parts.

1. The *Bridegroom* is Christ, *John* 3. 24. called the *one Husband*, *2 Cor.* 11. 2. for there is not another spiritual husband, to whom believers can be matched. He is the *King's Son*, for whom the marriage is made, *Matth.* 22. 1, 2, &c. He is the *Lamb*, unto whose marriage the hearers of the Gospel are invited, *Rev.* 19. 9. And *Psal.* 45. he is the *King*, unto whom the *Queen* is to be brought after she is adorned; by this name he is also stiled in this Song, *The King*, Chap. 1. 4, 12, &c. and the *Beloved*. Those, and such titles are given to him, which cannot be understood to be attribute to any but to Christ only, by believers.

2. The *Bride* is the Church, and every believer in divers considerations (as is said before) who are married to Christ, and are to be made ready and adorned

adorned for the solemnizing of the marriage. Of the nature of this marriage see more, Chap. 8. 8.

3. The *Bridegroom's friends* are honest ministers, who rejoice to see him great; such as *John* was, *Jo.* 3. 29. and such were the apostles, *Jo.* 15. 15. Such are here the *Watchmen*, trusted with the oversight and edification of others, spoken unto, Chap. 2. 15. and spoken of, Chap. 3. 3.

4. The *Virgins*, or children of the marriage-chamber, are here called *Daughters of Zion*, Chap. 3. 11. and of *Jerusalem* (many whereof are weak, ready to stumble, Chap. 1. 6. and of little knowledge, Chap. 5. 9. and ready to stir up the Bridegroom, Chap. 3. 5.) and the *Virgins that love Christ*, Chap. 1. 3. and the upright, Chap. 1. 4.

5. The *Mother* is the universal visible Church, wherein are many true believers, who are converted to Christ by the Word and Ordinances dispensed therein, and to which also many hypocrites belong as members.

6. The *children of the promise*, are true virgins that love Christ; the *children of the bond-woman*, and the flesh, are unrenewed professors in the Church, as also false teachers, who act their part here likewise, Chap. 1. 6. and 2. 15. and 5. 7.

(3.) This conference, as it is betwixt Christ and the believer, is followed as betwixt married parties. 1. In their titles, they attribute to each other. 2. In their claiming of this relation one in another, as that he is hers, and she is his. 3. In their expressions, which are such as use to be betwixt most loving parties, who live, exercising conjugal love, most kindly and intimately together. The reason whereof is, 1. To shew the near union that is betwixt Christ and his Church; there is a relation, and a most near relation betwixt them, that is not betwixt him and any others. 2. To shew the kindly effects of that relation in both the parties, especially the faithfulness and tenderness of the husband, in walking according to it in every thing. 3. 'Tis to sweeten every piece of exercise, the believer meets with; yea, to make all dispensations digest the better, seeing they are dispensed, and ordered by such a loving husband. 4. 'Tis for warming the believer's heart the more to Christ, and to make this Song heartfom and delightfom, that so believers may have always a marriage-song, and every night may be to them as a marriage-night.

(4.) The purpose or subject of this Song, is Christ, and divine things of all sorts; but mainly the experiences of grown Christians, held forth in most noble and lively expressions, as was before a little cleared.

(5.) The scope of all is, to express the desirableness of fellowship with the Bridegroom, and how the Bride thirsteth and longeth for it; and how careful she is to entertain it, and by laying out his matchless excellencies to commend him to others; and which also seems to be the scope and design, for which this scripture is given to the Church: And so her breathing after communion with him, doth here begin the conference, *v. 2. Let him kiss me, &c.*

(6.) The

(6.) The manner of their expression is, 1. Sweet and loving; and therefore this conference is carried on, under the terms of marriage, and the titles of *Beloved, my Love, Spouse, &c.* (as being the most lively that can express that relation, and most apposite for entertaining of mutual love) are here made use of. 2. The manner of expression is something obscure, tho' sweet, that so the Lord's people may be stirred up to painfulness, and diligence in searching out his mind; and also, because the mysteries here contained, are great, and cannot, as they are in themselves, be conceived: therefore, that they may be illustrate, parables are used, as *Mat. 13. 34.* compared with *Mark 4. 33.* where it is clear, that the intent and effect of the Lord's speaking by parables, is to help some to take up these mysteries, and to leave some ignorant. 3. The Spirit of God doth here make use of borrowed expressions, the more lively to set out the spiritual matter contained under them; and, by things most taking, and best known to our senses, to hold out divine mysteries, unto which these expressions are to be applied. 4. Often these same expressions are made use of in one place, in speaking to the Bridegroom, and in another speaking to the Bride, he calling her *chief among the Daughters*, and she him *chief among the Sons*, but in a different sense; for, he styles her from his acceptance of her, and from his imputation and communication of his graces to her: but she styles him from his own excellency and worth, he having all in himself, and nothing borrowed from any other, but imparting that which is his, to her.

*Secondly*, The Rules we would take alongst with us in our proceeding, are these:

1. We would find out, who speaks in every passage of this Song; for this serves much to clear what is spoken.

2. We would carefully ponder, what is the purpose of the Spirit in every part thereof.

3. We must apply and conform expressions to the scope, and expound them by it, and not stick too much in following of every thing, which these allegories seem to bear; but draw the doctrines from them, being compared with the scope, and other places of scripture, not insisting too far upon the similitudes.

4. We are to take special notice of the Bride's frame, in her manner of speaking: For we may observe, that often, in the vehemency of her passionate love, she breaks out without any seen connexion, or order, as *Chap. 1. 2.* and by cutted, broken, and vehement expressions, in her divers frames and tender fits, as her case is up or down, (abruptly, as it were) she useth to express her self.

5. We must not apply all so to the Church, as to shut out believers, nor contrarily; but take in both, where both may come in; and more especially apply to the one, where the purpose makes most for it, as hath been said.

CHAP.

## CHAP. I.

### Verse 1. *The Song of Songs, which is Solomon's.*



Before we enter upon the purpose of this chapter, or give the division of it, we would first speak to the Title contained, *ver. 1.*

We account this Title Scripture, it being in the Original, even as other titles, prefixed to divers Psalms, as to *Psal. 51, 102, &c.* In it three things are set down; 1. The nature of this scripture. 2. Its excellency. 3. Its instrumental author, who was made use of by the Spirit in penning of it.

*First,* For the nature of this scripture, It is *a Song*. Songs, in scripture, are such portions or books thereof, as were especially intended to be made use of, for the praising of God, the edifying and comforting of his people, in singing of them. Three sorts of them were in use among the *Hebrews* (as the titles of our psalms do clear, and as they are mentioned by the apostle, *Eph. 5. 19.*) 1. Psalms, such were used, both with voice and instruments. 2. There were Hymns (so the 145 psalm is intituled) such in the matter of them, were wholly made up of praise, and what immediately led to that. 3. There were spiritual Songs, which were more extensive in the matter, taking in histories, cases, and exercises of all sorts; and might be sung with the voice, without instruments, either publicly or privately. Of this last sort, is this Song, intended to be made use of in the praises of God; and so composed, both for matter and manner, as it might best attain that end, and prove edifying and comfortable also to believers, in their singing of it.

2. The excellency of this Song is exprest in this, that it is *A Song of Songs*, A most excellent Song; this being the manner how the *Hebrews* express their superlatives. While it is called *A Song of Songs*, it is compared with, and preferred

ferred to all other songs. And we conceive the comparison is not only betwixt this and humane songs; but, 1. It is compared with, and preferred to all these which *Solomon* wrote; and 'tis preferred to all these One thousand and five, mentioned, 1. *King.* 4. 32. 2. It is compared with all other scriptural songs, such as is recorded *Exod.* 15. and *Judg.* 5. &c. Of all which, this is the most excellent, as being, 1. Purposely intended to treat of the most choice and excellent subject, to wit, Christ and his Church; which is not done upon particular occasions, as in other songs, but is the great Purpose that is only designed and pursued. 2. It treats of Christ and his Church, in their most glorious, lively, and lovely actions, to wit, his care of, and his love unto his Church, and that in its most eminent degree; and also, of her love to him, in its various measures and workings. 3. It is in a most excellent manner composed, by way of conference and sweet colloquies betwixt these two parties, having in it many excellent expressions, and variety of them, well interwoven with sundry cases of several sorts, to make the whole draught the more taking and excellent. 4. It is set forth in a most lovely, excellent, majestic stile and strain, which exceedingly ravishes and captivates affections, making the love contained in it, sweetly favour and relish, through the beautiful garment of borrowed expressions, which is put upon it. 5. It is a most excellent Song, in respect of its comprehensiveness: here is an armory and store-house of songs in this one, where there is something treasured up for every case, that may be edifying and comfortable, which will not be so found in any other song; there being something here suiting all sorts of believers, under all the variety of cases and dispensations wherewith they are exercised; and also, all the relations under which the Church standeth: All which should commend this Song unto us.

It is recorded of the *Hebrews*, that whatever scripture was delivered in a poetical frame, they accounted themselves specially bound to take notice of that, and to get it by heart: and indeed it is not for nought, that some scriptures, and not others, are casten in that mould: and something of this, as the intent of the Holy Ghost, may be gathered from *Moses* his putting his last words in a song, *Deut.* 32. that they might be the better remembered.

The 3d thing in the title, is the penman made use of by the Spirit, in the writing and recording this Song: It is *Solomon*, a great man, rich, wise, yea, an elect saint; yet, one, who had also fallen into many foul faults, whom the Lord hath suffered to die, without recording expressly any thing of his recovery, tho' we make no doubt of it; which (because *Bellarmino*, lib. 3. de *Justif.* Chap. 14. pag. 368. *Tannovius* and others, are at pains in contradicting this; yea, *Augustine* doubts of it, because nothing is directly recorded of his recovery) we shall endeavour to make clear, from these considerations,

First,

First, From the Lord's promises to him, 2 Sam. 7. 14, 15. where these three things are observable, which the Lord undertakes concerning him.  
 1. That he will be to him a father. 2. That he will correct him with the rods of men, if he shall sin; which saith, he would not eternally punish him.  
 3. That he would not do with him as he did with Saul, whom he rejected; he would not take away his mercy from Solomon, as he had done from him: And if no more were in these promises, but what is temporal, there would be no great consolation in them to David (whose consolation is one chief part of the scope of that place.) Beside, these promises, Psal. 89. 31, 32, 33. (which are the same with these, 2 Sam. 7.) are looked upon as special evidences of God's love, and peculiar promises of his saving-covenant.

2. When he is born, the Lord gives him his name, yea, sends Nathan 2 Sam. 12. with this warrant, to name him Jedidiah, because the Lord loved him; which cannot be a love flowing from any thing in him, as if he had been well pleased with his carriage, (Solomon had not yet done any thing good or evil) but it must be a love prior to his works, and so not arising from his good deeds, and therefore not cut off by his sins; which, being like the love God had to Jacob, before he had done good or evil, Rom. 9. 11. must speak out electing love, as it doth in that place.

3. He is made use of by the Spirit, to be a penman of holy writ, and a prophet of the Lord; all which are, by our Lord, Luke 13. 28. said, to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; and there is no reason to exclude him, seeing that universal (all the prophets, &c.) would not be a truth, unless he were there. And tho' some wicked men have prophesied, as Balaam did, yet are they never accounted prophets of the Lord, as Solomon was, but false prophets and inchanters; neither were they penmen of holy writ; who were, as Peter calleth them, 2 Pet. 1. 21. Holy men of God, speaking as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost.

4. Neither are the peculiar privileges, he was admitted unto, to be forgotten: By him the Lord built the temple, by him the covenant was explicitly renewed with God, 1 King. 8. 9. and his prayers are often particularly mentioned, to be heard; yea, after his death, some testimonies are recorded of him, which cannot consist with his rejection: See 2 Chron. 11. 17. where the ways of Solomon are put in, as commenable, with David's, tho' there were defects in both; and this being immediately after Solomon's death, it would seem he left the worship of God pure, and so had turned from his idolatry, tho' all the monuments of it were not abolished. And especially in this, he was singularly privileged, that, in a most lively way, he was the type of our blessed Lord Jesus, in his intercession, reign, and peaceable government: be-

sides that, by particular covenant, the kingdom of Christ, and his descent from him, was established to him.

5. It is of weight also, that it seems more than probable, that *Solomon* wrote *Ecclesiastes* after his recovery; it being neither among the *Proverbs* nor *Songs* which are mentioned, *1 King. 4. 32.* And in it, he speaks out the experience he had both of *folly* and *madness*, and the vanity he had found in all created things, even when he had perfected his essay of all the possible ways of attaining, either the knowledge of their perfections, or satisfaction in the enjoyment of them.

The scripture, therefore, hath not left his recovery altogether dark; yet, as to any historical narration thereof, the Lord hath so ordered, that he passeth away under a cloud, for these good ends:

1. Thereby, *Solomon* is chastised with the rods of men (even after death) upon his name; for, his miscarriages are set down expressly, but his recovery (as to any direct testimony thereof) is past over.

2. By this, the Lord maketh his displeasure with *Solomon's* ways, known; tho' he had favour to his person, and gave him his soul for a prey.

3. Thus the Lord would affright others from declining, and hereby teacheth his people to be afraid to rest upon gifts, yea, or upon graces, seeing he hath left this matter so far in the dark, as might yield an occasion (as it were) to question the eternal condition of *Solomon*.

4. It may be also, that *Solomon*, after his recovery, did never recover his former lustre, nor attain to such a profitable way of appearing in God's publick matters, for which formerly he had been so observable: for so it is taken notice even of *David*, after his fall, that his following life is stained, as different from what went before; therefore it is the commendation of *Jehoshaphat*, *1 Chron. 17. 3.* that he walked in the first ways of his father *David*, which certainly is not done to condemn *David's* state after that time, but to leave that mark (as a chastisement) on his failings: and seeing *Solomon's* were greater, therefore may this silence of his recovery be more universal as to him.

Before we draw any thing from this, by way of use, I shall answer a doubt, and it is this, How can all these thousand and five songs, mentioned *1 Kings 4. 32.* be lost, without wronging the perfection of canonick scripture? Or, what is become of them? Or, what is to be accounted of the loss of them?

*Ans.* We say, 1. The scriptures may be full in the articles of faith, even tho' some portions thereof, which once were extant, were now a-missing; except it could be made out, that some points of faith were in these books, which are not to be found in other scriptures. 2. Yet, seeing it is not safe, and it wants not many inconveniencies, to assert that any book once designed of God to his Church, as a canon or rule of faith and manners, should be lost; and

and seeing it is not consistent with that wise providence of his, whereby he hath still carefully preserved the treasures of his oracles in his Church; we rather incline to say, that tho' these songs were possibly useful, and might be written by the Spirit's direction, yet that they were not intended for the universal edification of the Church, nor inrolled as a part of his word, appointed for that end. Neither can it be thought strange that it should be so; for, that a thing be scripture, 'tis not only needful that it be inspired, but also that it be appointed of God for publick use. 'Tis not improbable, but *Isaiah, Moses, David, Paul*, and others, might have written many more writings, upon particular occasions, or to particular persons, which were useful in themselves for edification; and yet were never appointed of God to be looked upon, or received as scriptures for publick use in his Church: So do we account of these songs mentioned in the objection, and other writings of *Solomon*, now not extant. And, it may be, the Spirit hath pitched on this Song, to be recorded, as the sum and chief of all the rest; as he did pitch upon some particular prayers of *David* and *Moses*, &c. passing by others.

And lastly, We are rather to be thankful for the great advantage we have by this, than anxiously to enquire what hath become of the rest.

There are four things, we would propose for use, from the title of this Song.

*First*, That singing of believers cases, even their several cases, is allowable; or, that singing of divers and different cases, yea, even their saddest cases, is not inconsistent with, but very agreeable unto, the work of praise. Ye see, this is a Song for the nature of it, which Song is to be sung; yet, for matter, exceeding comprehensive of all sorts of cases, and these various.

There are (amongst others) five cases, in which to sing, doth sometimes stumble, at least, stick much with those who are weak and tender; all which we will find cleared in the Bride's practice of singing this Song.

1. 'Tis doubted if sad cases should be sung, seeing, *James* 5. 13. 'tis said, *Is any man merry? let him sing Psalms.* *Ans.* 'Tis true, these who are merry should sing; but not only they, no more than only they who are afflicted, should pray: 'Tis not our case, nor our cheerful disposition, but the duty that should be respected in this work of praise; yea, we should sing, for cheering our disposition, and mitigating and sweetning our crosses: So doth the Bride here sing her sufferings, *Chap.* 1. 6. *Chap.* 5. 7. when she was smitten; yea, her desertions, she putteth these also in a Song.

2. 'Tis stumbled at sometimes, to sing complaints of our own sinfulness, and to turn our failings into songs; What matter of cheerfulness is there in these, may one think? But we say here, she doth so, *Mine own vineyard have I not kept* (saith she) *Chap.* 1. 6. *I sleep*, &c. *Chap.* 5. 2. 'Tis a ground of cheerfulness, that we may sing over these unto God, with expectation to be pardoned and delivered from them, as *Psal.* 65. 3.

3. When

3. When the matter is different from our case, some think it is hard to sing such psalms. *Ans.* Certainly in this Song there are different, yea, contrary cases ; yet none can think, but a believer may sing it all at one time. Yea, 2. There had never, then, been a psalm sung in publick ; for in no congregation can all the members ever be in one case. 3. The same might be objected against publick prayers also, seeing there may be many petitions that are not suitable to all joiners ; yet hath the Lord commanded both publick praying and praising.

4. When the matter, which is sung, is above us, being a thing we have not yet reached, and so cannot assert it in our particular condition as truth ; As these words, *Psal.* 18. 20, 21. *I have kept his ways, &c.* *Ans.* By this Song, all, at least most part of believers, are made to sing many things, beyond their own attainments possibly ; yea, *Chap.* 8. that phrase, *My vineyard which is mine, is before me*, is of that same extent with that, *Psal.* 18. 20. Yet will not any think, that the Spirit propounding this Song, and that Psalm, as a subject for publick praise, did ever intend that none should sing it, but such as were as holy as *David* ; yea, it would seem, that if either *David* or *Solomon* had stuck to the absolute perfection which these words seem to hold forth (if they be expounded according to the strict rule of the Law, and be not taken in an Evangelick sense) that neither of them would, or could have sung them : Yea, it is observable, that in this Song there are spots mentioned ; and *not keeping of the vineyard*, *Chap.* 1. is one part of the Song, as well as *keeping of it*, *Chap.* 8. is another.

How then may we join in these ? *Ans.* 1. We sing not our own sense and experience only, but what may attain the end of praise, which is attained, in our acknowledging what others have reached, tho' we our selves come short. 2. Not only our own case, as particular members, is to be sung ; but, in publick, we take in the praises of the whole body. 3. That expression, *Chap.* 1. 6. *Mine own vineyard, &c.* holds forth the sense she had of her negligence, not as if she had no way done her duty, but she confesseth her failings in it ; which she sings to the praise of that free grace, that had pardoned her. Again, the other expression, *Chap.* 8. 12. *My vineyard which is mine, is before me*, expresseth her sense of her sincerity, blessing God for it, and refreshing her self in the acknowledging of it : and both these may agree, as to some measure, in the believer's experience, at one and the same time ; tho', when the believer sinneth more grossly, they do not so well agree to him, except in respect of different times and cases.

In praising, then, we would neither simply look to our frame, nor to the matter in itself which is to be sung, nor to the cases we are in, as if these were the warrant of our singing, or the rule to regulate us in it ; but unto these

these three things. 1. The end wherefore singing is appointed. 2. The command. 3. The notion or consideration, in respect of which the believer joineth in the duty of praise.

The ends are principally three. First, Glorifying God, and making his praise glorious: Thus histories of the Lord's dealing with his people of old, and thus the cases of others, in our singing of them, serve to that end, that he did such works, that such a case was once sung to him, and such a saint was so dealt with; otherwise, we might scruple to sing, *Psal. 44. We have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us*, and other scriptures, as well as cases: And so the most part of the subject of praise, and the book of the *Psalms*, would be laid aside as useless, and not so much as to be read; for we ought not to read, or say an untruth, more than to sing it.

A second end is, edifying of others with whom we join, as well as studying edification our selves: So, *Col. 3. 16.* the end to be proposed in singing, is, *teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.* And suppose some found themselves unsuitable in their own case, to the purpose that is to be sung, yet, will it not teach them what they should be, and admonish them because they are not such?

A third end we are to aim at in singing, is, our own cheering and refreshing, *making melody in our hearts to the Lord, Eph. 5. 19.* Which ariseth not always from the matter simply considered, as it holds true in our own experience; but, 1. From our conscientious going about it, as a piece of worship to God; and so doing, we are accepted in that. 2. From the heartiness of that soul-refreshing exercise of praise; and so that scripture which might be more sadning in meditation to us, yet should be cheering in praise, because it is then used in that ordinance. 3. From the possibility, that is herein discovered, of attaining such a blessing, frame, or experience, because once a saint did attain it: and since they were men of the like passions and infirmities with us, why may not we aim at, and hope to be made saints of the like graces with them, since they were, what they were, by the grace of God. 4. From this, that it was once made good in another; which mercy should be a ground to us to mention it to the Lord's praise. 5. From its being a part of scripture, appointed for his praise, whether it agree with our case or not: That being the end wherefore it was designed to be sung, is a sufficient warrant for our joining in the singing thereof.

Secondly, We would consider the command we have, not only to praise, but to praise in these words of *David*, and other penmen of holy *Psalms*; for which cause, God hath furnished his Church with Songs (but not so with forms of prayers, to which he would have us ascribed) and that for preventing doubts concerning the matter: For, 1. If God did propone these songs to

to be sung, then they are fit to praise him. 2. If he did allow none to sing them, but such as had no hesitation or scruple to assert them, with application to themselves; then, either never should they be sung, or never in publick. But, 3. Did he not appoint them to be used in *David's* time? and joiners then were not all of one size: Sure they had never been committed to publick use, if none might have joined in singing them, but these who could sing them from their own experience; or, will a believer be challenged for praising God, in the rule and words laid down by him? Certainly not: however he may be challenged, if he be not suitably affected in the singing of them.

*Thirdly*, We would consider the notion, or capacity, under which believers join in this duty: For they join, either as parts of the whole Church, and so they go about their part of the duty of praise (as the matter holdeth true in any member indefinitely, even as they join in prayers) so being that which is sung, be allowed matter for that end: Or, they join as true believers; and then what points out infirmity, they look on it as agreeing to their flesh; what points out sincerity, they as spiritual, tho' not perfect, join on that account in the thankful acknowledging of it; what confesseth a sin, if guilty, they acknowledge it; if not, they bless God they are preserved by grace; yet they are made to see their corruption, which hath the seed of that sin in it, and take warning: as in singing the 51 *Psalms* is requisite, when all are not under that guilt, which *David* there confesseth.

A 5th case in singing, which hath been matter of doubting to some, is, when they are put to sing with others, who possibly are strangers to God. *Ans.* Such may be cleared from this, that the Bride joineth with the *Daughters of Jerusalem*, often they have a share in holding up this Song; so doth she go to the *Watchmen*, being willing to join with them who smote her: And certainly this and other songs being to be sung in publick in the congregation, and such a congregation as none will plead that it ought to have been separate from, it is clear they joined, and that upon the account of the former grounds.

The *Second* thing, we are to observe for use, is from the commendation of this Song, being, for its excellency, *A Song of Songs*: and it is this, That the believer hath the choicest song, and most excellent mirth in the world; not such songs or joy as the world hath, or giveth, *John* 14. 27. Yea, their songs are such songs as none can learn but themselves, *Rev.* 14. 3. O how happy and cheerful a life might a believer have, if he did not sometime marr his own comfort! All is most excellent which he hath; his songs are so, for they have the most excellent subject, to wit, *Christ*, *Psal.* 45. and the most excellent grounds of rejoicing, and most solid; the largest, sweetest, and most comfortable allowance in the world. Considering all this Song together, tho' it hath

hath sundry sad and perplexing cases, yet it is most excellent ; Or, right thoughts of Christ will make every condition sweet, and a song : Nothing will come wrong to a believer ; Christ, Christ maketh up all, and maketh all excellent : every condition with him is excellent ; who so covets him, coveteth what is best ; who so neglects him, neglects what is only worth the seeking, and what can only afford a song to the owner : And it is clearness in Christ's worth, and an interest in him, that turns all conditions into a song.

*Thirdly*, From the author (I mean the penman) consider, That piety and tenderness is not unbecoming, but is rather an ornament to the most noble, most rich, and most wise men in the world : It is a greater glory to *Solomon*, and a greater evidence of his eternal good condition, that he was acquainted with, and taken up in holy exercises, than that he was a king ; yea, places, parts, riches, &c. are beautiful, when made subservient to piety ; piety maketh these to shine in *Solomon* : And the Spirit also maketh use of natural and moral wisdom, which the Lord had bestowed upon him, to set out deep mysteries in these writings ; which shews, that the Lord would have any measure of these gifts he hath bestowed on us, adorned with the exercise of grace, and made subservient to his glory. Also we may see here, that much business in mens common affairs, and a tender walk, are not inconsistent ; if men would prudently manage their time, they might have access to their employments, and keep a spiritual frame also, as *Solomon*, *David* and others did. It is our corruption, and not the multitude of lawful employments, that distracts us : *David* went home to bless his own family, in the midst of publick affairs, 2 Sam. 6. 20.

*Fourthly*, From the consideration of the penman (stained with such faults) made use of by God in the composition of this Song, we may observe, 1. That neither place, parts, nay, nor graces, will exempt any man from falling : O believers, what need is there to be watchful and humble ! May not these examples of *David*, *Solomon*, *Peter*, &c. lay your pride, and put you to your arms, and necessitate you to be upon your watch ? Who of you will claim to *Solomon's* knowledge, experience or privileges ? Yet even he, the penman of this sweet scripture, had his affections to God cooled, and became an offence even to this day ; what is spoken of his fearful backsliding and fall, being still a rock of offence, upon which many still break their necks. 2. There may be much corruption dwelling beside much light and grace, and yet the one not fully put out or extinguish the other. 3. Grace hath fitted and made use of many a knotty tree for the Lord's work ; for what *Solomon* naturally hath been, may appear in his carriage (seeing mens sinful carriage and way is but the product of the natural corruption that is in their heart) notwithstanding he is thus made use of. 4. Corruption may ly long under grace's feet, and

G

grace

grace may attain to a great height, and yet corruption may again strangely break out, and grace be brought very low : What knowledge had *Solomon* ? what presence and cleanness had he gotten by the Lord's appearing to him ? what hearing of prayer ? how useful was he in God's work, in building the temple, ordering all the *Levites*, &c. and continued thus eminent for many years, even till he was well stricken in years, and then fell so foully ? How may this strike us with fear ? It is much to win fair off the stage, without a spot. Be humble ; and *he that standeth, let him take heed lest he fall*. 5. Grace can wash foul spots out of believers garments, seeing no question *Solomon* was washed ; and as he was recovered, so grace is able to recover the saints from their most dangerous and fearful backslidings. 6. Sometime the Spirit will honour the penmen of holy writ, by mentioning and recording their names, other times not ; as is clear from some books, unknown by whom they were written : the Lord doth in this according to his pleasure, and as he seeth it may tend to edification.

*Verse 2. Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth : for thy love is better than wine.*

Having spoken to the Title, we come now to the Song itself ; which being by way of conference or dialogue, we shall divide the several chapters according to the number of the Speakers, and their several intercourses in speaking : And so in this chapter we have 5 parts. In the 1. the *Bride* speaks to *verse 8*. In the 2. the *Bridegroom*, to *verse 12*. In the 3. the *Bride* again, to *verse 15*. And 4. the *Bridegroom* speaks, *verse 14*. And lastly, the *Bride*, in the two last *verses*.

The *Bride* begins this sweet conference, *verse 2*. and continues to *verse 8*. 1<sup>st</sup>, She speaks to Christ, *vers. 2, 3, 4*. Then, 2<sup>dly</sup>, to the *daughters of Jerusalem*, *vers. 5, 6*. Lastly, She turns her self again to the *Bridegroom*, *verse 7*.

In the first of these, there is, 1. Her aim and desire, by way of an earnest wish laid down, *verse 1*. 2. The motives that stir up this desire in her, and whereby she presseth it on him, *vers. 2, 3*. 3. There is a formal prayer set down, *verse 4*. which is amplified in these three, 1. In the motive proposed. 2. In the answer obtained, and felt. 3. In the effects that followed on it.

Her great wish is, *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth*. That it is the *Bride* that speaks, is clear : She begins, not because love ariseth first on her side (for here she begins, as having already closed with him ; and therefore she speaks to him, as one who knows his worth, and longs for the out-lettings of his love) but because such expressions of Christ's love, as are to be found in this Song, whereby his complacency is vented and manifested to-

wards

wards us, doth first presuppose the working of love in us, and our exercising of it on him, and then his delighting (that is, his expressing his delight) in us: For altho' the man first suit the wife (and so Christ first sueth for his Bride) yet when persons are married, it is most suitable, that the wife should very pressingly long for, and express desire after the husband, even as the Bride doth here after Christ's kisses, and the expressions of his love. Of this order of Christ's love, see *Chap. 8. verse 10.*

In the words consider, 1. What she desires, and that is, *the kisses of his mouth.* 2. How she points Christ forth, by this significant demonstrative, *Him.* 3. Her abrupt manner of breaking out with this her desire, as one that had been dwelling on the thoughts of Christ, and feeding on his excellency; and therefore now she breaks out, *Let him kiss me, &c.* as if her heart were at her mouth, or would leap out of her mouth, to meet with his.

*First,* By *kisses*, we understand most lovely, friendly, familiar and sensible manifestations of his love: kisses of the mouth are so amongst friends; so it was betwixt *Jonathan* and *David*, and so it is especially betwixt husband and wife.

*Next,* There are several delightful circumstances, that heighten the Bride's esteem of this, the so much desired expression of his love. The 1. is implied in the person who is to kiss; it is *Him*, *Let him kiss*; He who is the most excellent and singular person in the world. The 2. is hinted in the party whom he is to kiss; it is *me*, *Let him kiss me*, a contemptible despicable creature; for so she was in her self, as appears from *ver. 5, 6.* yet this is the person this love is to be vented on. 3. Wherewith is he to kiss? It is with the *kisses of his mouth*; which we conceive is not only added as an *Hebraism*, like that expression, *The words of his mouth*, and such like phrases; but also to affect her self, by expressing fully what she breathed after, to wit, kisses, or love, which are the more lovely to her, that they come from his mouth, as having a sweetness in it (*Chap. 5. 16.*) above any thing in the world. That Christ's love hath such a sweetness in it, the reason subjoined will clear, *for thy love is, &c.* That which is here *kisses*, is immediately denominate *loves*; it is his love that she prized, and whereof kisses were but evidences.

They are *kisses*, in the plural number, partly to shew how many ways Christ hath to manifest his love, partly to shew the continuance and frequency of these manifestations, which she would be at. The thing which she here desires, is not love simply, but the sense of love; for she questioned not his love, but desired to have sensible expressions of it, and therefore compares it not only to looks, that she might see him, but to kisses; which is also clear from the reason annexed, while she compares his love to wine.

*Again,* Her manner of designing Christ is observable, *Him.* It is a relative, where

where no antecedent goes before ; yet certainly it looks to Christ alone, as the reasons shew : Here no rules of art are kept, for love stands not on these. This manner of speaking is to be found also in moral authors, when one eminent is set forth, who is singularly known beside others, as having in the estimation of the speakers no match ; so *Pythagoras's* scholars used to say of their master, *αὐτὸς ἐστίν*, He said it : And in scripture, when the saints speak of the Lord, they thus design him, because they are not afraid to be mistaken, *Psal.* 87. 1. *His foundation*, &c. and *Isa.* 53. 2. *He shall grow up like to a tender plant*. This is neither for want of titles due to him, or rhetorick in her ; but because in this manner of expression the saints set forth, 1. Christ's singular excellency, which is such, that he hath no match or equal ; there is but one *Him*. 2. Their singular esteem of him, whatever others think. *1 Cor.* 8. 6. *To us there is but one Lord, Jesus* : only Christ is esteemed of by them. 3. A constant and habitual thinking and meditating on him ; for tho' there be no connexion in the words expressed, yet what is expressed may have, and hath connexion with the thoughts of her heart : and if all were seen that were within, it would be easily known what *Him* she meant. And so we are to gather its dependence on the affection, and meditation it flows from, rather than from any preceeding words ; for here there are none. 4. It is to shew, her thoughts of Christ were not limited, or stinted to her words, or her speaking of him : for tho' there be no words preceeding, to make known who this *Him* is, spoken of ; yet we may well conceive her heart taken up with desire after him, and meditation on him : and so there is a good coherence ; *Let him*, that is, *Him* I have been thinking on, *Him* whom my soul desires, he only whom I esteem of, and who hath no equal, &c. This sort of abruptness of speech hath no incongruity in spiritual rhetorick.

Whence we may observe, 1. That Christ hath a way of communicating his love, and the sense of it, to a believer, which is not common to others. 2. That this is the great scope and desire of a believer ; if they had their choice, it is to have sensible communion with Christ : this is their *one thing*, *Psal.* 27. 4. It is the first and last suit of this Song, and the voice of the Spirit and Bride, and last prayer that is in the scripture, *Rev.* 22. 17. 3. That believers can discern this fellowship (it is so sweet and sensible) which is to be had with Jesus Christ. 4. That they have an high esteem of it, as being a special signification of his love. 5. That much inward heart-fellowship with Christ, hath suitable outward expressions flowing from it. 6. That believers, in an habitual walk with Christ, will be abrupt in their suits to him, sometimes meditating on him, sometimes praying to him. 7. That where Christ is known, and rightly thought of, there will be no equal to him in the heart.

2. In the next place, she lays down the motives that made her so desire this ;

this ; which are rather to set forth Christ's excellency, to strengthen her own faith, and warm her own love in pursuing after to concerning a suit, than from any fear she had of being mistaken by him, in being (as it were) so bold and homely with him in her desires. First, The reason is generally proposed, *verse 2.* and enlarged and confirmed, *verse 3.* The sum of it is, Thy love is exceeding excellent, and I have more need, and greater esteem of it, than of any thing in the world ; therefore I seek after it, and hope to attain it.

There are four words here to be cleared, 1<sup>st</sup>, *Thy loves*. (so it is in the Original in the plural number) Christ's love is sometimes (as the love of God) taken essentially, as an attribute in him, which is himself ; *God is love*, 1 *Jo.* 4. 8. Thus the Lord, in his love, is the same in all times. 2. For some effect of that love, when he doth manifest it to his people, by conferring good on them, and by the sensible intimations thereof to them : So it is, *John* 14. 21, 23. We take it in the last sense here ; for she was in Christ's love, but desired the manifestations of it ; and it is by these that his love becomes sensible and refreshful to believers. It is *Loves* in the plural number, altho' it be one infinite fountain in God, to shew how many ways it vented, or how many effects that one love produced, or what esteem she had of it, and of the continuance and frequency of the manifestations thereof to her ; this one love of his, was, as many loves.

The *second* word to be cleared, is *Wine*. Wine is cheering to men, *Psal.* 104. 15. and makes their heart glad : under it here is understood, what is most cheering and comfortable in its use to men.

3<sup>dly</sup>, Christ's love is better, 1. Simply in itself, it is most excellent. 2. In its effects, more exhilarating, cheering and refreshing. And, 3. In her esteem, to me (saith she) *it is better* ; I love it, prize it, and esteem it more, as *Psal.* 4. 8, 9. *Thereby thou hast made my heart more glad*, &c. This his love is every way preferable to all the most cheering and refreshing things in the world.

4<sup>thly</sup>, The inference, *for*, is to be considered : it sheweth that these words are a reason of her suit ; and so the sense runs thus, Because thy love is of great value, and hath more comfortable effects on me, than the most delightfulness of creatures, therefore let me have it. Out of which reasoning we may see what motives will have weight with Christ, and will sway with sincere souls in dealing with him, for the intimation of his love : for the love of Christ, and the sweetness and satisfaction that is to be found in it, is the great prevailing motive, that hath weight with them ; and sense of the need of Christ's love, and esteem of it, and delight in it alone, when no creature-comfort can afford refreshing, may and will warrant poor hungry and thirsty souls, to be pressing for the love of Christ, when they may not be without it. Which shews,

1. That a heart that knows Jesus Christ, will love to dwell on the thoughts of his worth, and to present him often to itself, as the most ravishing object, and will make use of pressing motives and arguments, to stir up itself to seek after the intimations of his love. 2. That the more a soul diveth in the love of Christ, it is the more ravished with it, and presseth, yea, panteth the more after it: It was *Him* before, *Let him kiss me*, as being something afraid to speak to him; it is now, *Thou, Thy love, &c.* as being more inflamed with love, since she began to speak, and therefore more familiarly bold, in pressing her suit upon him. 3. The exercise of love strengthens faith; and contrarily, when love wears out of exercise, faith dieth: These graces stand and fall together, they are lively and languish together. 4. Where Christ's love is seriously thought of, and felt, created consolations will grow bare, and lose all relish; wine, and the best of creature-comforts, will lose their savour and sweetness with such a soul, when once it is seen how good he is. 5. An high esteem of Christ is no ill argument in pressing for, and pursuing after his presence; for, to these that thus love and esteem him, he will manifest himself, *Jo.* 14. 21, 23. 6. Where there hath been any taste of Christ's love, the soul cannot endure to want it; it cannot enjoy itself, if it do not enjoy him: this is the cordial that cheareth it in in any condition, and maketh every bitter thing sweet.

**Verse 3.** *Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy Name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love thee.*

The second reason (which is also a confirmation and enlargement of the former) is *verse* 3. and it runs upon these supposed and implied grounds. 1. That there are many precious excellencies in Christ. So that, 2. the speaking of his Name, is as if a man would open a sweet favouring box of ointment, as that woman did, *Jo.* 12. 3. There is no title, or office, or qualification in Christ, but all are savoury; his very garments smell of *myrrhe, and aloes, and cassia, &c.* *Psal.* 45. 8. 3. It suppones that this worth and loveliness of Christ ravishes all that ever knew him (here called *Virgins*) with love to him: and therefore (which is the strength of the reason) it is no marvel, would she say, I love him so fervently, and desire so earnestly the manifestations of his love, which I have found so sweet.

So the *verse* may be taken up in these four things. 1. Christ's furniture; he hath many savoury ointments, and good. 2. The further explication, and amplification of this his commendation, expressing both what she meant by ointments, and also the abundance and freshness of these ointments which were in Christ; in these words, *thy Name is as ointment poured forth.* 3. The effect that followed on these, or the attractive virtue of them, which is such, that

that the most chaste, who kept their affections from other objects, are yet, without prejudice to their chaste nature, taken up and ravished with that loveliness of Christ: *Therefore (saith she) do the virgins love thee.* 4. There is the scope, which is partly to shew the reality of Christ's worth, which, not only she, but all believers were in love with; partly to shew, that it was no strange thing, to see her so taken up with him; it would be rather strange, if it were otherwise, seeing it is not possible for any to see and taste what Christ is, and not be ravished with his love.

Ointments are both of an adorning and refreshing nature, especially to the sense of smelling, *Psal. 104. 15. Ointment makes mens face to shine*, and the house where it is, to savour, when it is precious and good, *Jo. 12. 3.* Men in vanity use sweet powders, and such things as these, which can but little commend them; but Christ's ointments are his graces, *Psal. 45. 2.* where-with he is anointed, *for opening the blind eyes, for preaching glad tidings to the poor, to bind up the broken-hearted, to give the oyl of joy for mourning, &c.* as it is, *Isa. 61. 1, 2, 3.* Which qualifications, are both more delightfom and savoury in themselves, and to the soul that is sensible of its need of him, than any ointments the high priest of old used, which were but typical of the graces and qualifications wherewith Christ is furnished: Hence is the gospel, *2 Cor. 2. 14, 15.* (whereby these graces are manifested) called *a sweet savour*.

Again, these ointments are said to be *good*: so are they in their nature, and in their effects on sinners, as is clear from *Isa. 61. 1, 2, &c.* And 2. they are said to *savour*, the scent and smell of them is sweet and refreshful to the spiritual senses. And 3. they are called his, (*thy good ointments*:) They are his, not only as he is God, having all-sufficiency essentially in him, but as Mediator, having purchased eternal redemption, and having *the Spirit without measure* communicate to him, *Jo. 3. 34.* and, in that respect, *anointed with the oyl of gladness above his fellows*, *Psal. 45. 7.* that out of his fulness we might all receive grace for grace, *Jo. 1. 14.* Our graces being of that same nature that his are of. It is comfortable, that Christ hath many good ointments; that they are his own, and that he hath the right of disposing of them; and that, as Mediator, they are given unto him for that very purpose.

*Observ.* 1. Grace is a cordial and savoury thing, no ointment is, like it. 2. Christ abounds in grace, he is *full of grace and truth*, *Jo. 1. 14.* Hence our wants are said to be made up, *according to his riches in glory, by Jesus Christ*, *Phil. 4. 19.* 3. They are good and excellent graces and qualifications, wherewith the Mediator is furnished; such as do exactly answer all the necessities and wants of empty and needy sinners.

2. The commendation is explicate, or illustrate by a similitude. The thing she explains, and which she understood by ointments, is his *Name*; the similitude

militude, whereby it is illustrate, is, *Ointment poured forth*. Christ's Name is himself, or the knowledge of himself, or every thing whereby himself is made known, his Attributes, Word, Works, especially these of Redemption, his Ordinances, Covenant, Promises, &c. which are all his Name (for so the preaching of the gospel is called the *bearing of his Name*, Acts 9. 15. and making known, or *declaring of his Name*, Psal. 22. 22. Heb. 2. 12. &c.) This is the thing illustrate. Now, this Name is compared, not to ointment simply, as sealed up in a box, but to ointment as poured forth and diffused: whereby, 1. The abundance of these graces is holden forth; there is no scarcity of them in him. 2. His liberality in communicating of them; he pours them out, as one opening a box of ointment, should so diffuse and distribute it. 3. By this is set out, the lively favouriness of his graces; they favour not only as ointment closed up, but as ointment diffused. In a word, there is nothing in Christ (for whatever is in him, is comprehended under his Name) but the unfolding of it will be more refreshful, and abundant in spiritual delights, than if men would break and open many boxes of costly ointments, and pour them all out on others.

*Observ.* 1. Believers are not soon satisfied in taking up, or expressing of Christ's worth. 2. Christ, and all that is in him, is as full of spiritual life and refreshing, as a box that is full of the most precious ointment: Christ is well stored with grace, it is *poured into his lips*, Psal. 45. 2. 3. This favour of Christ's graces is not felt by every one; the box of his ointments is not open to all, but only to some, and that is to them that believe; for *to them he is precious*, and every thing that is in him is most cordial and savoury to the believer. 4. The more Christ and his worth be enquired into, it will favour the better, and be the more refreshful (for it is his Name which is this ointment) Christ in his excellent worth, through men's strangeness to him, is unknown in the world; they do not enquire into this savoury Name: but if he were once known, they would find that in him that would make them give over their other unprofitable pursuits, and pant after him.

The effect of these his ointments (which is a proof of the reality of this truth, and the third thing in the *verse*) is in these words, *Therefore the virgins love thee*. By virgins here, are not understood bare professors, but sincere believers, who are not counterfeit in their affection, nor so common in their love, as to bestow it on any creature whorishly, but who reserve it for Christ only: So the Church is called, 2 Cor. 11. 2. *A chaste virgin*; and so these who were kept unspotted, and sealed for the Lord, Rev. 14. 4, 5. are called *virgins*. They are here called *virgins*, in the plural number, because this denomination belongs to all believers, distributively, and in particular. They are said to *love* Christ, that is, whatever others do, who have no spiritual

ritual senses, and whose example is not to be regarded; yet these (saith she) desire thee only, and delight in thee only: and this differenceth true virgins from others.

If it be asked, whether that be single love, which loves Christ for his ointments? We answer, Christ's ointments may be two ways considered, 1. As they make himself lovely and desirable; so we may, and should love him, because he is a most lovely object, as being so well qualified and furnished. 2. As by these, many benefits are communicate to us; thus we ought to love him for his goodness to us, altho' not principally, because no effect of that love is fully adequate, and comparable to that love in him, which is the fountain from which these benefits flow; yet, this love is both gratitude and duty, taught by nature, and no mercenary thing, when it is super-added to the former. Hence observe,

1. All have not a true esteem of Christ, tho' he be most excellently lovely: for, it is the virgins only that love him. 2. There be some that have an high esteem of him, and are much taken with the savoury ointments, and excellent qualifications wherewith he is furnished. 3. None can love him and other things excessively also; they who truly love him, their love is reserved for him, therefore they are called *virgins*: It is but common love, and scarce worth the naming, that doth not single out its object from all other things. 4. They who truly love him, are the choice and wyle of all the world beside; their example is to be followed, and weight laid on their practice (in the essentials of spiritual communion) more than on the examples of kings, scholars, or wise-men: so doth she reason here from the *virgins*, and passeth what others do. 5. True chaste love to Christ, is a character of a virgin-believer, and agrees to them all, and to none other. 6. The love that every believer hath to Christ, is a proof of his worth; and will be either a motive to make us love him, or an aggravation of our neglect.

Verse 4. *Draw me, we will run after thee: the King hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.*

Being now more confirmed in her desire, from the reasons she hath laid down, she comes in the 4th verse more directly to propound and press her suit: for, rational insisting upon the grounds of grace, in pressing a petition, both sharpens desire, and strengthens the soul with more vigour and boldness, to pursue its desires by prayer. In the words we may consider, 1. The petition. 2. The motive made use of to press it. 3. The answer, or grant of what was sought. 4. The effects of the answer following on her part, suitable some-way to her engagement.

The petition is, *Draw me*; a word used in the gospel, to set forth the efficacious work of the Spirit of God upon the heart, ingaging the soul in a most sweet, powerful and effectual way to Jesus Christ: *None can come to me* (saith Christ) *except the Father draw him*, Jo. 6. 44. It is used here, to set forth the Bride's desire to be brought into fellowship with Christ, by the power of this same Spirit; that as she desires a visit from Christ, so she desires his Spirit, that he may by his powerful operations draw her near to him. And altho' a believer be not at a total distance with Christ, and so needs not renovation, as one in nature doth; yet, considering what a believer may fall into, a deadness of frame, as to the lively exercise of grace, and a great distance, as to any sensible sweet communion with Jesus Christ, and that it must be by the power of that same Spirit (without which even these that are in Christ can do nothing) that they must be recovered, and again brought to taste of the joy of his salvation (as is clear from David's prayer, *Psal.* 51. 10. to have a clean heart created in him, &c. See verse 12. of that psalm.) and that there are degrees of communion with him, and nearness to him, none of which can be won at without the Spirit's drawing, more than being made near at the first in respect of state: I say, all these things being considered, it is clear, that this petition is very pertinent, even to the Bride, and doth import these particulars: 1. A distance, or ceasing of correspondence for a time, and in part, betwixt Christ and her. 2. Her sense and resentment of it, so that she cannot quietly rest in it, being much unsatisfied with her present case. 3. An esteem of Christ, and union with him, and a desire to be near, even very near him; which is the scope of her petition, to be drawn unto him, that she may have (as it were) her head in his bosom. 4. A sense of self-insufficiency, and that she had nothing of her own to help her to this nearness, and so a denying of all ability for that in her self. 5. A general faith, that Christ can do what she cannot do, and that there is help to be gotten from him (upon whom the help of his people is laid) for attaining spiritual life, and recovering her to a condition of nearness with himself. 6. An actual putting at him (so to speak) and making use of him by faith, for obtaining from him, and by him, quickning, efficacious and soul-recovering influences, which she could not otherwise win at. 7. Diligence in prayer; she prays much, and cries for help when she can do no more.

The motive whereby she presseth this petition, is, *We will run after thee*: wherein we are to consider these three things, 1. What this is, to run; which is, in short, to make progress Christ-ward, and advance in the way of holiness, with cheerfulness and alacrity (having her heart lifted up in the ways of the Lord) for, the believer's life is a race, heaven is the prize, 1 *Cor.* 9. 24. and *Phil.* 3. 13, 14, &c. and the graces and influences of the Spirit give  
legs,

legs, strength and vigour to the inner-man to run, as wind doth to a ship, to cause her make way ; as it is *Psal. 119. 32. Then I shall run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart* ; which is, on the matter, the same with *drawing* here. And this running is opposed to deadness, or slowness in her progress before ; Now (saith she) I make no way ; but draw me, and we shall go swiftly, speedily, willingly and cheerfully. Hence we may gather,

1. That often when there is desertion as to Christ's presence, there is an up-sitting in duty and the exercise of grace. 2. That bonds in duty are as observable and heavy to believers, as want of comfort. 3. That there is in them an high estimation, and a serious desire of enlargement in duty, or of liberty to run in the way of God's commandments. 4. This desire is very acceptable with Jesus Christ, and therefore is made use of as a motive in pressing her petition before him : He takes it well, when a believer is like to ly by and sit up, that he look up to him, and pray and pant for help, to set him to his feet again.

2dly, Consider why the person is changed, *Draw me* (saith she) and we shall run. If we take the Church collectively under *me*, then *we*, will set out the particular members ; and it is this much, Do me good, or pour thy Spirit on the Church, and we shall run in our stations who are members : It is the better with all the members, when it is well with the Church in general. But it would seem to look to particular believers, the effect of drawing being most proper and peculiar on them : and so it is to be understood thus, If thou wilt draw me, and by the power of thy grace work effectually upon me, then many more shall get advantage by it ; which holds true, partly by reason of the sympathy that is amongst the members of that one body, partly because a work of grace fits and engages one the more to be forthcoming for the good of others, partly because of the influence which liveliness in one may have upon the quickning and stirring up of others ; even as often, when deadness begins in one, it leaveneth and infecteth more, so by God's blessing may liveliness do. This same argument is made use of by *David, Psal. 51.* when he is dealing for the establishment and liberty of God's Spirit, *Then* (saith he, *verses 12, 13.*) *I will teach sinners thy way, and they shall be converted unto thee.* He was not only purposed to stir up himself, and walk tenderly in the strength he should receive, but that he would lay out himself for the good of others ; and he promised himself success therein, through the grace of God. And so *Joshua, 24. 15.* *I and my house will serve the Lord* : which speaks, that his serving the Lord, would have influence upon his house. Experience doth often make out, that a lively soul in a congregation, or family, will readily occasion and provoke others to stir and seek with them.

3dly, The force of the reason, in the connection it hath with the petition,

imports, 1. That she was much in love with holiness, and had an ardent desire after more of it. 2. That she resolved to improve her receipts, for the edification of others. 3. That these designs were very acceptable to Christ. 4. That except she were drawn, she would come short of both. 5. A cheerful engaging to be forthcoming to his honour and the good of others, and to undertake what he shall call to, and fit for: These go well together, that when we see and are sensible, that we of our selves, as of our selves, can do nothing, 2 Cor. 3. 5. yet we may humbly engage, *to do all things through Christ strengthening us*. In a word, I have need (would she say) to be drawn, if holiness be needful; and I hope, thou, who respects holiness in me and others of thy people, will grant what I seek. Her engaging to run, if he would draw, is no vain undertaking; but a humble pressing motive, holding forth some sincerity given from him, but no ability in herself, but as he who hath given her to will, must also work in her to do.

The *Third* thing in the verse, is, the return or grant of this suit; *The King* (saith she) *hath brought me into his chambers*; He hath indeed brought me where I was desirous to be. The words, *he hath brought me*, being compared with the petition, *draw me*, and the effects following, whereby she changeth from praying to praising, and that with expressions holding forth a kind of surprisal, do evidence this to be a real return to her prayer, and a comfortable alteration upon, and change in her condition.

In this answer, consider, 1. what she receives, a noble privilege; she is admitted into the *King's chambers*, to nearness with him, which she longed for, and now she hath it. Chambers are the most intimate places of familiar fellowship, especially with kings, where none but courtiers indeed come; they were the place where the Bridegroom and the Bride rejoiced together: and it hath a tacite opposition to a salutation by the way, or admission to outer rooms; this, to which she is admitted, is more, yet is it something here-away attainable; which, we conceive, is the enjoying of that love she formerly sought for, and which afterward she engageth to remember, as having now obtained it. In a word, she is where she would be, as the effects shew.

2. Consider who brought her into these chambers; it is *the King*, even him she prayed unto, to draw her, he hath heard her: This *King* (as being the chief of all that ever bare that name) is called *the King*, by way of eminency; and so, *Psal.* 45. 1, 2. and *Zech.* 4. 9. he is not only King, and Supreme, as God, having the same essential dominion with the Father, over all the creatures; but also (which is here especially meant) as Mediator, he is a King by donation, *Psal.* 2. 6, 7. and also by conquest, having purchased his kingdom with his blood, and by the power of his spiritual arms, that are effectual upon the hearts of sinners, brings them to subject to him, *Psal.* 45. 5. So he

confesseth himself to be a King before *Pontius Pilate*, *Jo.* 18. 36, 37. altho' his kingdom be not of this world. It is he, who by his blood hath made access for believers to nearness with God, as it is, *Eph.* 2. 18. through that new and living way, *Heb.* 10. 19, 20. so that she may well say, *He brought her in.* She attributes this to him expressly, 1<sup>st</sup>, For his commendation, and to give him the acknowledgment due to him in this work, which would never have been wrought without him: All nearness and access to God, all progress in holiness, and comfort in duties, should not only be sought by, and from Christ; but he acknowledged for these, and the praise of them returned to him.

2<sup>dly</sup>, She observes the return of her prayer, and his readiness to be intreated; I prayed to him to draw (saith she) and he did it effectually: *He drew me, and brought me into the chambers.* Here we may see, 1. Christ is easily intreated, *Isa.* 65. 24. *Before they call, I will answer.* 2. Believers should observe returns of prayer, and bless Christ for them. 3. She acknowledgeth he had brought her into the chambers, to magnifie and to commend the mercy the more: It is the greater honour, that not only she is there, but that the King himself (like the prodigal's father) met her, and took her in: Christ's convoy is much worth, and sinners may hazard forward with it, and not despair of access. 4. She attributes it to him, that she may keep mind of his grace, whereby she stands and enjoys these privileges; and that she may be still humble under them, as having none of these from her self: It is much, under sense and a fair gale of flowing love, to carry even, and to be humble; and it is rare to be full of this new wine, and bear it well.

3. Consider the importance of the word in the Original; it is here translated, *he brought me in*, as it is *Chap.* 2. *verse* 4. but the word in that conjugation, in which it is used in the first language, signifieth, *he made me come, or go in*; implying, 1. A sort of aversness and inability in her self. 2. Many difficulties in the way. 3. An efficacious work overcoming all these, and effectually bringing her over all, as the same word is used, *Psal.* 78. 71. where God's bringing *David* from the fold to be king, over so many difficulties, is spoken of.

The last thing in the verse is, the effect following on this her admission, which is both exceeding great spiritual cheerfulness in her self, and gladness of heart also in others, whereby both her own, and their hearts were much enlarged in duty, as she undertook (and therefore the person from *me* to *we* is changed again) for before, she saith, *he brought me*, &c. but now, *we will be glad*, &c. The effects, by way of gratitude, are in two expressions, 1. *We will rejoice and be glad in thee.* And, 2. *We will remember thy love more than wine.* And as she took her motive, while she desired Christ's love, from that esteem which all believers (under the title of *virgins*) had of it; so now, having

ving obtained what she sought, she confirms her estimation of that enjoyment, from the experience of the same believers, under the name of *upright*; that, by such an universal testimony in both assertions, she might the more confirm her faith anent the reality of Christ's worth, seeing her esteem of him did flow from no deluded sense in her, but was built on such solid reasons, as she durst appeal to the experience of all believers, who thought Christ well worthy the loving: And so this is not only brought in here to shew the nature of believers, whose disposition inclines them natively to love Christ, but also to shew the excellent loveliness of Christ, as an object worthy to be loved, in the conviction of all that ever knew him. The first expression holds forth a warm change upon her affections; no sooner is she admitted into the chambers, but she crieth out, *O we will rejoice and be glad in thee*. Where, *First*, Ye have her exercise and frame, it is to rejoice and be glad: Cheerfulness and joy, disposing the heart to praise, are sometimes called for, as well as prayer. If we look on this joy as it stands here, it says, 1. There are degrees and steps in communion with Christ; and the saints are sometimes admitted to higher degrees thereof, than at other times: Sure, it is a heartsome life to be near Christ, and in his chambers. 2. This joy, and that nearness with Christ, which is the ground of it, are both often the effect of prayer, and follow upon it, when faith is in a lively way exercised in that duty. 3. That faith, exercised on Christ, can make a sudden change to the better in a believer's case, *Psal.* 30. 6, 7, &c. 4. That a believer should observe the changes of Christ's dispensations, the returns of their own prayers, and be suitably affected with them, whether he delay the answer, or give them a present return.

The *Second* thing in the expression, is, the Object of this joy; it is *in thee*: Not in corn or wine, not in their present sense, but in him as the Author of their present comfortable condition, and as being himself their happiness, even in their greatest enjoyments; according to that word, *1 Cor.* 1. 31. *Let him that rejoiceth, rejoice in the Lord*: And this qualifies joy, and keeps it from degenerating into carnal delight, when he that rejoiceth, rejoiceth in the Lord; and it is a good character to try such joy with, as may warrantably pass under that name of the joy of the Lord, and as will have that effect with it, to strengthen us in his way, *Neh.* 8. 10.

3dly, We may consider a twofold change of the number in the Bride's speaking; it is *We*, which was *Me*: *The King brought me*, said she; but now, *We will rejoice*. The reasons were given on the Petition; and further, we may add here, that it is to shew her being conform in her practice to her undertaking; and to shew, that that admission of hers redounded to the good of moe, and ought to take them up in praise with her. The other change of the

the person is, from the third to the second, from *He*, the King, to *Thee*, in the second Person, (*we will rejoice in Thee*) which shews a holy complacency and delight, sometimes making her to speak of him, sometimes to him, yet so, as she loves to have Christ both the object and subject of her discourse; and the more he be to her, she is the more satisfied: This being another character of spiritual joy, and exulting in Christ, it still makes him to be the more to them, and they are still pressing under it to be the nearer to him.

The *Second* effect is, *We will remember thy love more than wine*. What is understood by *love* and *wine*, as also, why the number is changed from the singular to the plural, hath been formerly cleared. The word, *remember*, doth import these three things, 1<sup>st</sup>, A thankful acknowledgment of the favour received, and a making of it to be remembred to his praise; this remembring is opposite to forgetting, *Psal.* 103. 2. From which we may observe two things, 1. The acknowledgment of the mercies we have received, is a necessary piece of the duty of praise; they will never praise for a mercy, who will not acknowledge they have received it: forgetfulness and unbelief doth much marr praise. 2. They that pray much for any mercy, will most really praise when it is received; and this last is a duty as well as the former, but is not made conscience of, nor suitably performed, but by hearts that acknowledge God's goodness to themselves. 2<sup>dly</sup>, It imports a recording of this experience of God's goodness, for her own profit for the time to come: Thus every manifestation of his grace is to be kept as an experience for afterward, when that frame may be away, and he may hide his face, whereupon there will follow a change in the believer's frame. It is good keeping the impression of his kind manifestations still upon the heart; so the Psalmist endeavoured, *Psal.* 119. 93. *I will never forget thy precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me.* 3<sup>dly</sup>, It imports the doing of both these with delight: *we will remember thy love* (saith she) *more than wine*; that is, the thoughts of Christ's love doth and shall relish more sweetly than wine, or any comforts amongst creatures; the very thoughts of it are, and will be so cordial and refreshful.

The last expression, *the upright love thee*, is added for confirmation, as was said on *verse* 3. and may be lookt upon, as brought in by way of obviating an objection; Who (might it be said to the Bride) will so rejoice in Christ with thee? She answers, Whatever the most part of the world do, yet these who have spiritual senses, love Christ as I do. The difference betwixt this and the former expression in the end of the 3<sup>d</sup> *verse*, is in two, 1. Tho' the persons be the same, yet she gives them different titles: There she calls them *virgins*, as being chaste in their love, not joining themselves to idols, nor going a-whoring after creatures; here she calls them *upright*, as being sincere, neither dissemblers, nor hypocrites, but such as were really that which they.

they appeared to be, having a practice suitable to their profession; such was Job, Job i. 1. *an upright man*; such was Nathanael, John 1. 47. *an Israelite indeed*: These have not double ends, nor double hearts, but are straight, and may abide the touch-stone, their practice being their very heart turned outward. The other difference is in the scope: formerly they were brought in, as being desirous of Christ, as he was; here as delighted with Christ when he is enjoyed; both go together: And whoever are desirous after him, will be delighted in him while present, and afflicted for, and affected with his absence; in both she evidenceth a suitableness in her frame to the generation of God's people, and cares not from whom she differ, if she be conform to them.

*Observ.* 1. Where there is love to Christ, there is sincerity in practice: neither is there true love to be found in any hypocrites; for, sincerity and love to Christ go together. 2. Sincerity is a character of a virgin and true believer: If we would know who are the *virgins* spoken of, *verse 3.* she tells us here, they are the *upright*. 3. All who are sincere, or upright, come in in one category and reckoning; they are all of the same spiritual nature or disposition, and what may be said of one of them (as to that) may be said of them all. 4. God reckons believers, not by the degree of their progress, but by the kind and nature of their walk, if it be sincere or not, *that is*, if they be straight as to their ends, motives, and manner in duties, or not. 5. These characters which agree in common to believers as such, and these cases which agree with the ordinary way of all the saints in scripture, are solid; and weight may be laid upon them in concluding our sincerity, or the goodness of our state: but peculiar evidences, or singular experience, would not be leaned unto in that; as if our uprightness, or the goodness of our state, could not be made out without these, wherein possibly an hypocrite can go nearer to resemble a child of God, than in that which is more ordinary to saints, as such.

**Verse 5.** *I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.*

**Verse 6.** *Look not upon me because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me, they made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.*

In the 5th and 6th verses, we have the second piece of the Bride's first discourse, and it is the speech she hath to the daughters of Jerusalem: wherein,

*verse*

verse 5. she gives a description of her self; then, verse 6. applies and clears it, for some edifying use unto these beginners.

For clearing of this place, let us, 1. See, who these daughters of *Jerusalem* are. 2. What is the scope of these words. 3. What is their dependence upon, and connexion with the former. 4. What is more particularly the meaning of them.

By *daughters of Jerusalem*, in common, are certainly understood professors, members of the Church; and so born in, and belonging unto *Jerusalem*: but because there are members of several sorts, some strong, some weak, some sound, some unsound, some tender, some profane; we must inquire a little further who are meant by these daughters of *Jerusalem*, they being often mentioned in this Song.

1<sup>st</sup>, We look on them as distinct from mother's children, mentioned in the following verse, as a party different from the daughters here spoken to; and so they are not to be accounted amongst the profane, imbibtered heart-enemies of godliness, who yet live in the Church: They are not the worst then of them that are in the visible Church. 2<sup>dly</sup>, We take them also as distinguished from the *virgins* and *upright*, who loved and delighted in Christ, in the former verse; for, chap. 5. 8, 9. and 6. 1. we will find them very ignorant of Christ, altho' they have some affection. In a word, we take them to include two sorts of professors, (1.) Such as are weak and scarcely formed, yet are docile, and respective to outward ordinances, and godliness in the practice of it: So their respect to the Bride, and the question propounded by them, chap. 5. 9. doth clear. (2.) They comprehend such as are formed believers, really honest, and who have some sound beginnings, yet mixed with much weakness, ignorance and infirmity, and so not come up the length of grown Christians; such who need milk, and cannot endure strong meat: so their question and undertaking, chap. 6. 1. doth evidence; they were daughters, while yet they were really very ignorant of Christ, and were ready to provoke him before he pleased (as the often repeated charge the Bride gives them throughout this Song imports) and they were daughters still, even after they were something better taught and engaged. We find, 1 *John* 2. 13. the apostle speaks of three sorts, 1. *Fathers*, that are grown believers, rich in experience; such we esteem to be understood by the Bride in this Song. 2. *Young men*, who are strong, well-advanced believers; such were the virgins and upright here made mention of. A 3<sup>d</sup> sort are stiled *little children*, that is, some who (as it were) are yet on the breasts, and that in knowledge, practice, or experience, had not come to a consistence, or to have their senses exercised to know good or evil, as it is, *Heb.* 5. 14. such we account these

I

daugh-

daughters of Jerusalem, and so may comprehend under them professors, who stand not in the way of their own edification, tho' they be weak.

*Secondly*, The scope of her discourse to them, is to prevent their stumbling at the cross, or being deterred from godliness, because of any blackness or spots that were to be seen in her; it being a great stumbling to weak professors, to see sufferings accompany tenderness (especially when it is persecuted, and pursued by professors of the same truth) as also, to see infirmities and sinful blemishes in persons eminently godly: Now her scope is, for their edification, to condescend to satisfy them in both.

*Thirdly*, The reason why she breaks in with this discourse, upon the back of the former, (which shews the connexion) may be twofold, First, To remove an objection that might be made: If any should say, What needs all this rejoicing? Are ye not both stained with sin, and blackned with suffering? She answers by a distinction, Granting that in part she was black, and that was truth, yet that blackness was not inconsistent with comeliness, which she clears, and that therefore she might in part rejoice also. The other way that this depends on the former, is, that she may further her project of engaging others to rejoice with her, she endeavours to remove these two occasions of stumbling (taken from the failings and sufferings of the godly) out of the way of weak professors, that she may get them alongst with her; and so it agrees well with the scope.

*Fourthly*, More particularly consider the words, wherein she endeavours to satisfy these doubts; and ye will find these things in them, 1. She concedes what is truth, 2. Qualifies it by a distinction, 3. Illustrates it; And these three are in the 5. *verse*. 4. In *verse* 6. She applies it; And 5. more particularly explicates it. *First* then (saith she) I answer, by conceding what is truth, *I am black*, both with crosses and corruptions, that cannot be denied. *2dly*, She qualifies her concession, Tho' I be black, yet I am *comely*; that is, I am not universally or altogether unlovely; mine estate is mixed, being made up of crosses and comforts, corruptions and graces, beauty and blackness. *3dly*, She illustrates this description of her self, or her mixed condition, by two similitudes, both tending to one thing, or one of them tending to set forth her blackness, the other her beauty: I am (saith she) like *the tents of Kedar*, which were blackish, and of no great value, being, by these who lived in them, so frequently transported in such hot countries; this sets forth her blackness. The second similitude is, that she was like *the curtains of Solomon*: he built glorious dwellings, and being a rich king, no question had rich hangings; this sets forth her beauty: As if she would say, Ye must not judge of my worth from one side, especially my out-side, or upon one consideration; for I have in me, both to humble and comfort me. It may be also, tho' these  
tents

tents of *Kedar* were not outwardly beautiful, yet they were within well furnished; and that the curtains of *Solomon*, which were most rich, had outer coverings of smaller value, as the tabernacle had of badgers skins. And so the similitudes illustrate her condition, and set out the thing more to the life: As *Kedar's* tents (saith she) look poor and base-like, yet, if ye look within, they are glorious; so think not strange, if I appear without beauty to the eye, there may be, yea, there is comeliness within, if ye could discern it; for *within the King's daughter is all glorious*, Psal. 45. 13. which way of distinguishing is a notable piece of spiritual wisdom and learning, and a great mean of peace in our selves; when what is true of our infirmities, is acknowledged, and yet the conclusion that temptation would infer, is denied. Here observe,

1. The conditions of believers, even the best of them, are mixed of good and ill, sin and grace, comfortable privileges and sad sufferings. 2. There is a mixture of blackness in believers beauty, even in her best frame and condition; for she is now in the King's chamber, and yet we find her saying, *I am black*. 3. Believers, if they would consider what they are rightly, they would look on themselves as having contraries in them. 4. Where challenges are just and well-grounded, they should be acknowledged, and taken with. 5. It is wisdom so to acknowledge our sin, as we may difference it from any work of God's grace in us. 6. Believers their observing of their sinfulness, should not make them deny their grace; and their observing their grace, should not make them forget their sinfulness. 7. The cross that follows godliness, or the stain and spot that is on a godly person, is sooner taken notice of by on-lookers, than either the advantages that follow holiness, or the graces and spiritual beauty of holy persons; this makes it needful to remove this offence. 8. When it may be edifying, believers would assert the worth and beauty of holiness, and their own comeliness thereby, as well as confess their own infirmities; and Christian communion will require both.

Having illustrate her answer, in the 4<sup>th</sup> place she applies it, *verse 6. Look not on me* (saith she) *because I am black*, seeing I am comely as well as black; look not on me only as such, and think it not strange that I am so. *Looking*, here, implieth indignation and disdain; and so, *Look not*, is here to be taken, 1. As being a caveat against indignation or disdain: *Look not*, &c. that is, disdain me not, as if nothing desirable were in me; for, sin often waiting on the affliction of God's people, obscures the beauty of grace, and makes them to be disdained and undervalued in the world. 2. This *Look not*, is a caution to dissuade them from gazing, or curious wondring at any cross that was on her, or sin that was in her: It should not be the object of their curiosity, much less of their delight or contentment, to see it so, *Obad. 12*. It is condemned in *Edom*, *Thou shouldst not have looked upon the day of thy brother*. Next, while

she saith, *Look not upon me because I am black*, she doth not dissuade them from looking on her blackness simply, but from looking only on it; that should not be the alone ground of their search into her condition, but they should take notice of what good was in her, as well as what was wrong. So then, her blackness should not be the only cause of their looking on her; it should not be their work to ask after her crosses and infirmities, and no more; this she supposes may affright and terrify them: And so it is implied here, that on-lookers often pore more on believers infirmities, than on their graces; and this is the fruit which follows, they procure a stumbling and fall to themselves.

*Fifthly*, In the rest of the 6. *verse* she doth more fully explicate her answer, in so far as concerned her blackness (for so the words run in the 6. *verse*) two ways. 1. In setting out her sufferings in general. 2. In a more particular distribution of the kind and occasions of her seeming unloveliness. Generally, her sad condition is expressed in these words, *The sun hath looked upon me*. The sun in these countries had great heat, as we may see in *Jonah* 4. 8. where the beating of the sun upon him did sore vex him. *Jacob* also says, it burnt him in the day-time, *Gen.* 31. 40. Therefore, *Matth.* 13. 6, 21. the Lord expresseth persecution, under the similitude of the scorching heat of the sun. Here the meaning is, as if she had said, It is no marvel I be black, I have been made obnoxious to all sorts of persecution, and therefore can have no outward beauty, but must be in the eyes of the world contemptible; even as one cannot endure the hot sun-beams, and not be blackened. So there are in this expression these things imported, 1. Persecution. 2. Vehement persecution. 3. Visible effects following it, she is thereby made black. 4. A continuance under it; So the sun's looking on her, till she be made black, imports. 5. There is her patient enduring of it. 6. There is her sense of it. Yet, 7. She is not ashamed of it, while she shews this her suffering to be no cause, why others should stumble at her.

Afterward, she proceeds more particularly to describe, first her sufferings, then her infirmities. She describes her sufferings, 1. In the instruments of them. 2. The cause of them. 3. The nature of them. The actors are not heathens, but *mother's children*: The visible Church is the common mother, who hath children born after the flesh, as well as after the Spirit; these children are professors of the same truth, but really not only strangers, but heart-enemies to godliness and true tenderness: such was *Ishmael*, and such are all unrenewed persons, who are children of the flesh, and such there will be (*Gal.* 4. 29.) so long as there is a Church visible; such instruments the apostle complains of, *2 Cor.* 11. 26. that he had *perils from false brethren* within, as well as from strangers without. This is not only mentioned to shew there are such enemies, but to set out more fully the Church's strait; she is often more bitterly

terly, and more subtilly persecuted by these who are called Christians, or professors of the Gospel, than by heathens themselves.

2. The cause of their sufferings, as from men, is, *They were angry with me*, saith she. She had not done them any personal wrong (as David often asserts of himself, in the like case) tho' she was not free of sin against God; but it proceeded from a malicious, malignant disposition of the natural men of the world, who, as they hate Christ, so do they hate all that are his, *John* 15. 18, 19. accounting them as the off-scourings of all men, and troublers of the world continually, upon no other ground, but because they are not such as themselves, and because God hath chosen them out of the world. This shews both the causelessness of their persecution, as also the degree of bitterness that it did proceed from. From which observe, 1. There are no such bitter enemies unto a godly person, as a graceless malignant professor: See *Isa.* 66. 5. 2. No sort of persecution doth so blacken, or obscure the beauty of an honest believer so much, as the foul bitter reproaches of malignant professors. Yet, 3. Believers are often even under that cross. And, 4. The best beloved believer, even Christ's Bride, will not in the world eschew it; innocency will be no guard, but to the conscience within. And if the Bridegroom himself, while he was in the world, did not escape it, the Bride cannot think to go free.

The nature of her sufferings is expressed thus, *They made me keeper of the vineyards*. That this implies suffering, and no trust put on her, the scope and her complaint makes it clear: beside, that it is given as the evidence of the hatred and malice of these persecutors. This general expression, then, being compared with other scriptures, will import these ingredients in her suffering, which occasioned her blackness; 1. That her suffering was heavy and painful: for it was a great drudgery, to be put to keep the vineyards; to be made keeper, was to watch both night and day, and so no wonder she was scorched, *Matth.* 20. 11. The bearing burdens in the *vineyard*, in the *heat of the day*, is spoken of as the greatest weight, and heaviest piece of their work. 2. That her suffering was reproachful; for the keeping of the vineyards was a base and contemptible service, therefore it is said, *Jer.* 52. 16. that the poor, who were not taken notice of, were left to dress the vines; and it is a promise, *Isa.* 61. 5. that his people should have freedom from that drudgery, and strangers should be employed in it, for them. 3. That her sufferings occasioned sad distractions to her in the worship and service of God; for, in scripture sometimes, vine-dressing is opposed to the worshipping of God, as a distracting, diverting exercise, which is very afflicting to God's people: Therefore, when they have a promise of more immediate access to God's worship, it is said, they shall be liberate from such diverting employments, *Isa.* 61. 5, 6. and instead of these, they shall get another task, to wit,

to be Priests to the Lord, and Ministers of our God, as if these exercises were somewhat inconsistent together ; and so she opposeth her own proper duty to this, in the next words : In a word, these malignant brethren procured her pain, shame, and distraction from the service of God, as much as they could, and in a great part prevailed.

*Observ.* 1. Malice in rotten professors against godliness, will sometimes come to a great height. 2. Malice in wicked men thinks nothing of true tenderness, or of these who truly are so ; but esteems them, and useth them as if they were most base and vile. 3. Often in outward things, the profanest members of the Church have the preeminence ; and the most godly, as to these things, are in the meanest and basest condition ; so as sometimes, they appoint the godly as their slaves, to their work. 4. Often, while wicked professors are in power, the truly godly are under affliction.

Though this suffering was sharp, yet she resents her sinful infirmities much more sadly, in the words following, *But* (saith she heavily) *mine own vineyard have I not kept* ; and this her slothfulness and unwatchfulness made her black, and also procured the blackness that was on her by her sufferings. This part of the verse implies, 1. The Bride's privilege. 2. Her duty. 3. Her sin. 4. Her sense of it. (1.) Her privilege is, she *hath a vineyard of her own*, beside these she was put to keep. The similitude of a vineyard, here, is to be taken in another sense, than in the former expression ; neither are we to think strange of this, seeing similitudes are to be interpret according to the different scope of expressions, and places in which they are used. By *vineyard* then here, is to be understood the particular privileges, graces and talents of any sort, which are given of God to a believer : these are the things she should have watched over ; the neglecting thereof brings blackness on her, and procures heavy challenges, called a *vineyard* here, and also *Chap. 8. 13.* partly, because there are many several graces to be found in believers, as plants planted in them ; partly, because these will furnish them matter of continual exercise and labour ; and partly, because what they have, they are to improve, that there may be fruit on them, and rent brought in to the master that intrusted them, *Chap. 8. 12, 13.* This vineyard is called *hers*, because the special oversight and charge of it, was committed to her. (2.) Her duty is to keep and watch over this vineyard, that is, to improve the talents she hath gotten, to see that no plants be unfruitful, and that no hurt from any cause inward or outward annoy them : Christianity, or godliness, is no idle task ; every privilege hath a duty waiting on it. (3.) Her sin is, that what with other diversions, and what from her own unwatchfulness, she had neglected the keeping of this vineyard ; so that this one task, which was put in her hand, she had not discharged it ; but laziness came on, and the vineyard

yard was not dressed ; thorns and nettles grew, and temptations brake in, and this marred her fruitfulness : In a word, she was no way answerable to the trust was put on her by Christ. (4.) She resents this: where these things may be taken notice of, 1. She sees it, and observes it. 2. She acknowledges it. 3. She is sensible of it, and weighted with it, as the greatest piece of her affliction. It is ill to be unwatchful, for that may draw on both fruitlessness and heaviness on a believer ; but it is good to observe and be affected with it, and to be walking under the sense of it, even in our most joyful frame, such as hers was here.

Here then, *Obs.* 1. Believers have a painful laborious task of duty committed to them. 2. They may much neglect this work and task wherewith they are intrusted. 3. Neglect and sloth makes the weeds to grow in their vineyard, and the building which they ought to keep up, to drop thorow. 4. It is not unsuitable or unprofitable for believers, in their most refreshing conditions and frames, sadly to remember their former unwatchfulness, and to be suitably affected therewith. 5. Believers should be well acquaint at home, how it stands with them as to their own condition and state. 6. They who are best versed in their own condition, will find most clearly the cause of all their hurt to be in themselves ; whatever is wrong in their case, themselves have the only guilty hand in it.

If any should ask, how makes this last part of the verse for her scope, in removing the offence before these weak beginners ? I *Ans.* It doth it well : for, saith she, there is no reason ye should stumble, or be troubled because of my afflictions ; they were without cause, as to men, tho' I am under much sin and guilt before God : Neither scarr at godliness or joy in Christ, because of my infirmities ; for, these spots came from mine own unwatchfulness, and not from godliness it self (which is the soul's special beauty) therefore take warning from my slips, and study to prevent the bringing on of such a stain and blot upon our profession, by security and negligence ; but esteem not the less, but the more of Christ his people and ways, and the beauty of holiness, which is to be seen in them ; because, by my unwatchfulness and untenderness, I have marred this beauty in my self, and that is the reason I look so deformed-like.

**Verse 7.** *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noon : for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions ?*

In the 7th verse, we have the third part of the Bride's first speech ; in which, she turneth her self from the daughters, to the Bridegroom ; and the

scope

scope of what she speaks here is, that by applying her self, by prayer and faith, to Christ Jesus (who is, and whom she for comfort acknowledges to be the great and good Shepherd of his sheep, *Jo. 10. 11.*) she may be guarded against the hurtful effects of these two evils which she acknowledged in the former verse, to wit, afflictions and sinful infirmities: In respect of the one, she desires Christ's guiding; and in respect of the other, his consolation: that so she being under his charge, may be upheld by him, and kept from miscarrying: That this is the scope, and so depends upon the former verse, especially the last part of it, will be clear, by comparing the last part of this verse, and the last part of the former together. There are these three in it, 1. The title given to Christ. 2. The petition, or thing sought. 3. The argument, whereby it is enforced.

(1.) The title is a sweet and affectionate one, *O thou whom my soul loveth.* In this title these things are implied, 1. A loveliness in Christ, and such a soul-affecting and ravishing loveliness, as no creature-beauty hath, or can have. 2. An ardent and vehement love in her towards him; so that she might say, her soul loved, honoured, desired, and esteemed him. 3. A disrelishing of all things beside Christ, as nothing; He is the only object her soul loves, he alone hath her heart, and is in the throne, as chief in her affections, and hath no allowed co-partner there, to whom this title may be applied. 4. It is implied, what title Christ will best accept of, even that which bears out most affection to him: there can be no greater honour, or more acceptable piece of respect put on him by a believer, than this, to own him and avow him as the only object of his soul's love; as the Bride doth here, *O thou whom my soul loveth!*

(2.) The thing that is here sought by the Bride, is set down in two petitions, meeting with the twofold strait she was in, to wit, of crosses and infirmities; and because fear of sin weighed her most, she begins with the suit that might guard against that, and in the reason presseth it most. The first petition then is, *Tell me where thou feedest,* (to wit, thy flock;) for, *feeding*, here is to be understood actively, that is, where he feeds others; and not passively (as in other places) where he feeds and delights himself. The second petition is, *Tell me where thou makest thy flocks to rest at noon;* that is, make me know, where and how thou comforts and refreshes thy people, under scorching persecutions and trials. So these petitions go upon the relation that is between Christ and his people, of Shepherd and flock, which is frequent in scripture. In sum, that which she seeks, is this, Thou who guides all thine, as a shepherd doth a flock, let me know how thou orders thy people, and carries them through in times of snares, and where thou refreshes them in time of trouble. These, being the two great duties of a shepherd, are well performed by Christ;

1. It is his work to feed them, and lead them in wholesom and safe pastures, *Psal.* 23. And, 2. To give them quiet and cool resting-places in the time of heat, when the sun becomes scorching ; and therefore prayeth she to him, *Seeing thou dost both these to thine, let me know the right way of partaking of the benefit of thy care.* Which two petitions imply, 1. That there is a near relation betwixt Christ and all believers, he is the shepherd, and they the flock, *Isa.* 40. 11. *Ezek.* 34. 11, 12. *Psal.* 23. 1, 2. 2. That Christ's flock may be, yea, usually are in hazard both of sin or straying, and also of affliction. 3. That Christ Jesus is tender of his people, in reference to any hazard they are in, of sin, or suffering ; He is the good shepherd, *Jo.* 10. 11. *He carries the lambs in his bosom,* *Isa.* 40. 11. *He stands and feeds his flock,* *Micah* 5. 4. 4. That he hath resting places, and shadows for refreshing and hiding his people, in all the storms and heats they may meet with. 5. That believers sometimes, under straits, may not know well how, either to rid themselves out of tentations, or to quiet themselves under crosses, till he help them with light and strength : they cannot know the Well, whence their supply and consolation cometh, till it be discovered, as it was to *Hagar*. 6. That, even then, when they know not how to be guarded against sin, and shadowed under suffering, Christ knows both, and hath help in both these cases provided for them. 7. That as it is he who must guide them in snares, and support them in sufferings ; so believers, when they are at their own wits-end in respect of both, ought even then to look for help and direction in these from him.

The reason presseth for his guiding, with a great weight ; *For, why* (saith she) *should I be as one that turns aside, after the flocks of thy companions?* In which, these things are implied, 1. That Christ may have companions, (not who are indeed so, but) such who set themselves up equally beside him, and make it their design to have others to follow them, but do not follow Christ themselves ; Thus hereticks, false Christs, *Matth.* 24. 23, 24. lusts, idols, or whatever is equalled or preferred to Christ, and not subjected to him, is made, as it were, his companion : sure, the scope shews, they were not friendly companions ; but it speaks the nature of corrupt men, who are seducers, and the sin of seduced people, that the one seeks to themselves, and the other attributes to them, too much. 2. That these companions may have flocks, and many followers, even as our Lord Jesus hath ; so *Matth.* 24. 23. *2 Per.* 2, 1, &c. 3. That believers, if not by Christ's care prevented, may go astray after some of these companions, and throng on in a way of error and defection with them. 4. That believers will be afraid of this ill, and also sensible of their own propensness to it. 5. It imports an abhorrency and indignation at that evil, of being carried away awhoring from Christ, *Why* (saith she) *should I be, &c.?* 6. She accounts it a great mercy to be kept in Christ's way, and

makes it a main piece of her prayer, that this may be granted to her as her mercy. 7. She exercises faith on Christ, and vents her request by prayer to him, concerning every thing she wants; be wanting what will, she betakes her self to him for the obtaining of it. 8. Where there is a lothness to go astray, or fall in snares, it will stir up to serious wrestling with Christ to prevent it. 9. Hazard of sin to believers (who are sensible of their inclination to go astray) and weakness to hold on in God's way, is a great motive, that, being made use of in prayer, hath much weight for obtaining direction, and an hearing from Christ; as it is a notable spur to stir up to pray seriously, *For (saith she) why should I be, &c.?* which speaketh forth her indignation against every wrong way, and her expectation, that if any thing prevailed with him, that would; and so we will find her success in this suit, to follow in the next words.

### 2d Part. CHRIST's Words.

*Verse 8. If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds tents.*

From the 8th verse to the 12th, follows Christ's express return to her former suit; and because it is he that speaks, we take it up as the second part of the chapter. In the Bride's condition there was, 1. Crosses and afflictions. 2. Sins and infirmities 3. Snares, and hazard of new failings. Now Christ so frames his answer, as he may meet with all her necessities most comfortably and lovingly; and because she was most affected with the fear of sin, he answers that first: And so he doth, 1. In order to her being guided against snares, give a direction for her duty, *verse 8.* 2. In order to her consolation under her suffering, and the sense of her failings, he commends her, *verse 9, 10.* 3. He gives her a promise, in order to her further consolation, *verse 11.* The scope of all is, to comfort her; and every part of the answer, being from Christ's mouth, may be effectual for that end.

In the direction, *verse 8.* there is, 1. The title he gives her. 2. The directions themselves, which are two. 3. A supposition, or ground upon which he gives them.

First, The title he gives her is, *O thou fairest among women*; which is much from Christ to the Bride, who immediately before stiled her self black: believers who are humble under the sense of their own infirmities, are never the less highly esteemed by Christ; nor are always his thoughts of believers as theirs are of themselves; nay, by the contrary, blushing at their own deformity.

formity, is a chief part of their beauty. The giving her this title, implies these three things, 1. A real worth in a believer, beyond the most noble person in the world. 2. A real respect unto, and esteem that Christ hath of them, which he hath of none other. 3. Wonderful tenderneſs, condeſcending, for her conſolation, to intimate theſe his thoughts of her, to her ſelf, now, when ſhe was otherwiſe ſadly afflicted, and under a double diſtreſs.

If it be asked, how theſe excellent titles and commendations may be applied to a ſinful believer. *Anſ.* Theſe four ways, 1. By communication and participation of the Divine Nature, they have a ſtamp of the Spirit of holineſs imparted to them, whereby they reſemble God, 2 *Pet.* 1. 4. and none other in the world can compare with them in this. 2. In reſpect of the imputation of Chriſt's righteouſneſs, wherewith they are adorned, and which they have put on, which makes them very glorious and lovely; ſo that they are beautiful beyond all others, through his comelineſs put upon them. 3. In reſpect of Chriſt's gracious acceptation, whereby he doth eſteem otherways of them, than of the moſt royal and beautiful in the world, they find ſuch favour in his eyes. 4. In reſpect of his deſign, project and purchaſe, ſhe is ſo, and to be made ſo in end; he will have his people made compleatly beautiful and ſpotleſs, before he have done with them, *Eph.* 5. 26. *without ſpot and wrinkle*: all which are peculiar to a believer, of whom glorious things are ſpoken and written, which are applicable to none other.

The directions are two, Would thou know, ſaith he, how to be kept out of ſnares? Then, 1. Look how the old worthies walked, and follow their way. 2. Have reſpect to the publick ordinances, and hold near them, that you may have direction from the Word, by theſe to whom I have committed the truſt of diſpenſing the ſame: I have (ſaith he) no new light to give you, nor any new way to heaven to ſhew you, nor any new means, ordinances, or officers, to ſend amongſt you, nor yet muſt ye expect immediate revelations; but walk in the light that ſhines to you, by the preaching of the Word by my miniſters, who are the under-ſhepherds which I have ſet over you: for thus I guide all by my counſel, whom I afterward receive to glory.

The firſt direction (*go thy way forth by the foot-ſteps of the flock*) hold forth, 1. That all believers, of old and late, are of one flock, of one common concernment, and under the care of one chief Shepherd: this is the flock ſpoken of *verſe* 7. whereof Chriſt is Shepherd. 2. That there is but one way to heaven, for the ſubſtantials of faith and godlineſs, in which they that went before have walked, and theſe that follow after muſt walk in the ſame way, if ever they expect to come there. 3. That there are many in all ages, whom God hath helped in trying times to keep in his way, and have been carried well through all difficulties to heaven. 4. That believers would obſerve

these beyond others, as being specially worthy of imitation. 5. That they should and may follow the commendable practices of believers in former times, and not affect singularity. 6. That it is commendable, and often safe in times when new opinions and doctrines bear sway, to follow their way, who we are sure went before us to heaven, *Heb.* 13. 7. *1 Theff.* 2. 14. *Heb.* 6. 14. This imitation of others, is to be limited with that necessary caution, in so far as the practice of others agrees with the first pattern, Christ, *1 Cor.* 11. 1. In a word, this direction shews there is no way, but the *good old way*, to be asked for, and followed in the most declining times, *Jer.* 6. 16. and that we would keep the very print of their steps, studying to be followers of *their faith*, who have been honourably carried through before us.

The 2d Direction puts them to the right use and improvement of the ministry of the Word, which he will have them to respect; *feed thy kids beside the shepherds tents*. Shepherds here, in the plural number, are the servants of that one Shepherd, whose own the sheep are: So ministers are called often shepherds or pastors, both in the Old and New Testament, 1. Because of their relation to Christ, by whom they are intrusted to feed his sheep; He is the owner, they are but shepherds, *Ezek.* 34. 2. Because of their relation to the flock, which is committed to their care, and for which they must give an account, *Heb.* 13. 17. 3. Because of the nature of their charge, as being assiduous, difficult, and tenderly to be gone about; for, such is the work and care of a shepherd, as we may see by what *Jacob* speaks of himself, when he had the charge of *Laban's* flock, *Gen.* 31. 40. 4. To shew the necessity of that ordinance. And 5. The respect people ought to have to them, who are over them in the Lord: no flock needs a shepherd more than a congregation needs a minister; people without labourers, being, like sheep without a shepherd, *Matth.* 9. 36. under a sad necessity of wandering and being lost. Next, *Shepherds tents* are mentioned, with allusion to these parts, where shepherds in the wilderness carried tents about with them; and so to be near the tent, was to be near the shepherd: it is like they kept lambs and kids nearest unto their tents, because they needed more oversight than the rest of the flock; for a lamb to be at its liberty in a large place, was dangerous, *Hos.* 4. 16. By *kids*, we understand young unexperienced believers or professors; whereby it is clear, 1. That there are kids and young ones in Christ's flock. Yea, 2. That the strongest believers, even the Bride, have their own infirmities; and there are some particulars wherein they are weak: for this direction is given to the Bride, as a particular and experienced believer; and seeing ordinarily weak believers are called *lambs*, and unrenewed men *goats*, it may be *kids* here are mentioned to point at the reliques of sinful nature, even in believers, which is the reason why they need still oversight. 3. It is clear, that the

the office of the ministry, is a standing, perpetual and necessary office in the Church, otherwise this direction would not always satisfy the believer's question here proposed. 4. The strongest believers have need and use of a ministry. 5. It is a great part of a minister's charge, to keep believers right, in snaring and seducing times, *Eph. 4. 12, 13, &c.* 6. Believers would make use of publick ordinances, and Christ's ministers, especially in reference to snares and errors; and they would take their directions from them, and in their difficulties consult with them, and their counsel would be laid weight upon. 7. Allowed dependence on a ministry, is a great mean to keep souls from error; whereas, on the contrary, when no weight is laid on a ministry, unstable souls are hurried away. 8. Christ hath given no immediate or extraordinary way to be sought unto, and made use of, even by his Bride, in her difficulties; but the great mean he will have her to make use of, is a sent ministry, and therefore no other is to be expected: It is no wonder therefore the devil (when his design is to cry down truth and spread error) seek to draw the Lord's people from the shepherds tents; and no wonder souls, who once do cast off respect to their overseers, be hurried away with the temptations of the times, as in experience hath often been found a truth. 9. Ministers should have a special eye on the weakest of the flock, their care should be that the *kids* may be next them: Our blessed Lord doth so, when the *lambs* are carried in *his own bosom*, *Isa. 40. 11.* and therefore, seeing weak believers have most need of Christ's oversight, if they begin to slight the ministry and ordinances, they cannot but be a ready prey; and the devil hath gained much of his intent, when he hath once gained that. O that men would try whose voice that is, that saith, Come aback from the shepherds tents (when Christ says, Abide near them) It is as if a wolf would desire the lambs to come out from under the shepherd's eye. And lastly, When Christ gives this direction to his own Bride, we may see he allows none to be above ordinances in the militant Church; it will be soon enough then, when they are brought to heaven, and put above the reach of seducers.

The supposition is in these words, *If thou know not, &c.* which is not any upbraiding answer, but tendeth to insinuate the direction the more: I have given you means (saith he) and so he puts her back to the serious use of these, as he sent *Paul, Acts 9.* to *Ananias*, to have his mind made known by him. Which implies, 1. That a believer may be in many things ignorant. 2. That Christ pities the ignorant, and hath compassion on them who are out of the way, or are in hazard to go out of the way, *Heb. 5.* 3. That believers would not, in praying to Christ, neglect the ordinary means in seeking knowledge; nor, in using them, neglect him: She prays to him, and he directs her in them. 4. Directions for a believer's walk, given by Christ's ministers:

ministers from his word, are his own; and are accounted by him as if he did immediately speak them himself. 5. Christ would have his ministry and ordinances kept up in esteem and request amongst his people; therefore he will not be particular in giving answer to his Bride, but sends her to them, that she might know the usefulness of them, and learn to know his mind from them. 6. They cannot expect to make great progress in religion, that neglect the ministry, seeing it is to them that Christ recommends his own Bride: If people were inquiring at Christ, what should they do now, in a time when temptations to error and defection abound? No other answer were to be expected, than what he gives to his Bride here: Yea, if *Abraham* were intreated to send some from the dead, to advise people to abhor profanity and error, his answer would be, *They have Moses and the prophets*, they shall have no other; and no other would prevail, if these ordinances do not. People would conscientiously and thriftily use the means of light they have; for it is by such the Lord trains his own Bride: and tho' he will admit her as a courtier to his chamber, yet this familiarity he admits her to, is in the use of ordinances; and he will have no believer above ordinances and need of ministers, while he keeps them within the compass of snares.

*Verse 9. I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.*

*Verse 10. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.*

The commendation follows, *verses 9, 10.* in which the Bridegroom hath respect to two things, which afflicted her most in her condition. 1. That she was in hazard to be a prey to every sin, and to every enemy. 2. That she lay under many blots, and was made black by her own miscarriages: Therefore the Lord, that he might comfort her against those, is brought in speaking thus, Thou art neither so weak, nor so black and unbeautiful as the world thinks thee, and as thou esteems of thy self: my testimony of thee is better to be believed, than either the world's, or thy own; and I assert thee to be stately and strong, beautiful and comely.

First, *Verse 9.* He sets out her stateliness, strength and courage, by a similitude taken from horses: Are (saith he) *horses* stately and strong? for so in *Job* is the horse described, *chap. 39. 19, 20, &c.* and is not a company of them much more stately, especially a company of *Egyptian* horses, which were the best in the world? *2 Chron. 1. 17. Isa. 31. 1.* And if any in *Egypt* were beyond others, certainly *Pharaoh* the king had such in his own *chariots*. Now (saith

(saith he) if these be lovely, strong and stately, then thou art so; for, *I have compared thee* to such: This expression, *I have compared thee*, bears out the confirmation of the assertion; for, it is not men that think thee so, but I, who knows where true worth is, and who can be surety for my own assertion, I have said thou art as strong as these, I have likened thee to them, and made thee like them. This holds forth these things, 1. That there is an excellent courage and boldness, wherewith the believer is furnished beyond others; he is *bold as a lion*, Prov. 28. 1. both in duties and sufferings. 2. That there is in believers an undauntedness of spirit, and an unconquerableness, that overcome they cannot be; better fight with all Pharaoh's chariots, than with them, Zech. 12. Rev. 12. 3. The words hold out, that there is an infallible certainty in this truth: we have here Christ's verdict of it, he in his reckoning counts believers so, and he cannot be mistaken. 4. There is the cause why the Bride is so strong and stately, he makes her so: And so these words, *I have compared thee*, may be taken efficiently, I have made thee comparable, or made thee to be like them; and there is an article in the Original, which may confirm this, and the words may be turned, *like my company of horses*, or *of my horses*; which shews, that, as believers themselves are Christ's, so also, whatever stock of spiritual strength and courage they have, it is his, and from him: And that they are Christ's, and made use of by him, shews the use of their strength, Mic. 4. 13. and so, Zech. 10. 3. they are called *my goodly horse*. 5. It implies this, that it becomes not believers to droop, faint, or be discouraged under difficulties, seeing he hath past such a sentence, or given such a verdict of them; it is a reflecting on him, as if it were not so with them as he affirms, or as if he did bear false testimony concerning them. Now, this courage, strength and boldness, which is here attributed to believers, is to be understood of that which is competent to them peculiarly as believers; and their success in all their spiritual conflicts, is still to be looked upon with respect to the event, which is ever to be more than conquerors, in the issue at least, whatever appears for the present.

The second part of the commendation is, *verse 10*, wherein her comeliness and beautiful adorning is set out: Tho' thou think thy self black (saith he) yet, *Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels*, and *thy neck with chains of gold*. What is meant by *neck*, or *cheeks*, or *chains*, or *rows of jewels*, we think not necessary to be particularly inquired into: the allusion is to women, who, in these places, by such ornaments used to be adorned; and possibly there is here also an allusion to the horses of great ones, who are said to have chains of gold about their necks, Judg. 8. 26.

The scope and sum of the verse may be taken up in these things, 1. That tho' the Bride have some infirmities, yet there is exceeding great comeliness and

and loveliness to be seen in her; she is said to be comely, and that out of Christ's own mouth: Certainly grace puts much real beauty upon the person that hath it. 2. That she hath more ornaments than one; there are here *jewels* in the plural number, and *chains of gold* also: One grace goes never alone, neither is imputed righteousness and sanctification ever separate; whoever hath one grace, hath all. 3. That this beauty, which is to be seen on believers, is universal as to the subject; for, here one part of the body is adorned, as well as another, both *neck* and *cheeks*; the whole man is renewed, and the person is justified. 4. This comeliness grows not of any stock within the believer, nor is it natural to him, but it is communicate or imparted beauty, such as is put on, a comeliness proceeding from the beneficence of another, and is the work of a cunning workman. See *Ezek. 16. 10, 11.* where similitudes, like these in this text, are made use of.

**Verse 11. *We will make thee borders of gold, with studs of silver.***

In the 11. *verse*, for confirming of the former consolation, he gives her a promise; the scope whereof is to obviate an objection, which jealous sense might make against what he hath said: How shall beauty be obtained, or continued? might she say, whence shall it come, seeing I am so black and lothsome? To this he answers, as it were by a sweet promise, *We will make, &c.* Wherein we may consider, 1. The thing promised, it is *borders of gold*, and *studs of silver*. 2. The party promising, and undertaking the performance of it: *We will make them to thee*, saith he.

*Borders of gold*, and *studs of silver* ('t is like) have been some special ornaments in these days; and that which is here pointed at by them, in general, seems to be an addition to what formerly the Bride possessed; he would add to her beauty, and gloriously complete it: And certainly it must be an excellent work, which needs such workers as are here spoken of. We take the thing promised, to comprehend the increase, continuance and perfecting of her comeliness and beauty; in which work the blessed Trinity are engaged: and so, the second thing is, who undertakes it; *We will make thee*, saith the *Bridegroom*: This word, *make*, in the Original, is used for making of man at first, *Gen. 1. 26.* as also, for renewing of him, and begetting holiness in him, *Psal. 100.* because it is no less work to renew, than to create man. The number here is changed from the singular, *I have compared, &c. verse 9.* to the plural, *We will, &c.* As it is also in the first making of man, from the singular, *He made heaven and earth*, to the plural, *Let Us make man according to our image*; as if the Holy Ghost, purposely, in mentioning this renewing work of grace, did allude to the first work of man's creation. And this, 1. To shew the excellency of it; not that God was put to any deliberation, but that the

the work was, and is exceeding excellent, and therefore deliberately (as it were) gone about. 2. To shew, that man hath no more hand in his renovation than his first creation; that is, he is no more of himself able to bring about the one than the other. By this *We*, we do not understand God speaking of himself in the plural number, as in some languages, for honour's cause, kings do of themselves: For, (1.) If that were more honourable, then it would have always been used for God's honour, especially at solemn times, such as when the Law was given; but we find the contrary true from the scripture. (2.) Altho' that manner of speaking be used in some other languages, yet it is never so used in the *Hebrew* tongue (as, by these who understand it, is asserted, and by some of the most learned *Jews* is acknowledged) and therefore we understand the Trinity of Persons in one God-head to be here understood; for, this One is also Three, the Father, Son and Spirit, having a joint design in promoting the salvation of the elect, *Isa.* 61. 1, 2. And grace being a work, and gift prayed for, from them all, *Rev.* 1. 4, 5. it must be understood of these three blessed Persons of the holy Trinity, this work being common to the three Persons of the God-head, and communicable to no other, This then makes the consolation strong; for, saith Christ, Altho' the perfecting of your grace be a great task, and far above your reach, yet fear not, *We*, the Father, Son and Spirit have undertaken it, and shall make it out to you.

Hence we may learn, 1. That grown believers, even the Bride, hath need of more grace and spiritual comeliness; there is a necessity of looking after a further growth in those, even to be transchanged *from glory to glory*, *2 Cor.* 3. ult. 2. That growing in grace, and perseverance therein, is a great consolation and comfort to a true believer; and therefore the promise of it is given to the Bride for that end here. 3. That neither growth in grace, nor perseverance therein, is a work of the believer's own working, but the omnipotency of grace is exercised here. 4. There is plurality of Persons in one God-head; the God-head, that is *I*, is also *We*. 5. All the Persons of the blessed Trinity concur, and are engaged in promoting the holiness, and in perfecting the beauty of a believer. 6. All the graces of a believer are pieces of the workmanship of the holy Trinity: Grace then must be an excellent thing. 7. The perfecting and perseverance of a believer is infallibly sure and certain, seeing all the Persons of the God-head are engaged in this work; and they who this day are believers, may promise this to themselves. 8. Much of believers beauty is yet in the promise, and in the perfecting; so that it hath its defects and imperfections while they are here. 9. What is promised is so sure, that it ought to be no less comfortable than if it were enjoyed; for the promise ought to have no less weight for that end, than the former commendation.

dation. 10. Christ allows his people freedom from anxiety, because of things that are to come, and to be comforted in him against the fears of those, as well as to draw consolation from him against any evil that is present; therefore is this intimate unto them. 11. Believers ought still to hold all their enjoyments and privileges as from him, and the expectation of what is coming, as well as the performance of what is past. 12. Faith in the promise hath a large comprehensive object to rest upon, and to draw consolation from, even the power of the God-head, and what may be by the Father, Son and Spirit created, and brought about for a believer's good, even tho' it have not at present at present a being; *We will make thee what is wanting and what is needful*, says the promise: Creating power is engaged to through his work concerning them, *I create the fruit of the lips*, Isa. 57. 19. and, *I will create Jerusalem a joy*, &c. More cannot be desired, and less the Lord allows not.

### Part 3. BRIDE's Words.

Verse 12. *While the King sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.*

Verse 13. *A bundle of myrrhe is my Beloved unto me; he shall ly all night betwixt my breasts.*

Verse 14. *My Beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of En-gedi.*

The third part of the chapter follows in these three verses, 12, 13, 14. In it, the Bride expresseth how refreshful Christ was to her, and how she did solace her self in him: This she holds forth, not only in the sweet and warm title she gives him, but further in these three things, (1.) She declares the comfortableness of the fellowship she had with him, *verse 12.* (2.) By two comparisons she illustrates it, in the beginning of the 13. and 14. *verses.* (3.) She sets forth the warmth of her own affections to him, in the end of *ver. 13.*

The titles she gives him are two, *First, The King*, whereby his sovereignty and majesty is set forth. The *Second* is, *Beloved*, or *Welbeloved*, a title importing much love and affection: It differs from that title, *my love*, which he gave her, *verse 9.* for that is a compellation given to her by him, as from a superior to an inferior, or as from an husband to a wife; this title, which she here gives him, is as from an inferior, as a wife to her husband. The first holds forth condescending tenderness; the second, respective love; but both agree in this, that they are most loving and affectionate titles.

She sets forth the comfortableness of Christ's fellowship, *verse 12.* where

we are to consider these three things, 1. The privilege of his sweet company, which she enjoyed, in these words, *The King sitteth at his table*. 2. The effect thereof, held forth in this similitude, *my spikenard*, &c. 3. The connexion of these two, in this expression, *While the King sitteth*, &c.

*First*, The King, here spoken of, is Christ, as was cleared, *verse 4*. His table, or feasting-house, is the Gospel, *Prov. 9. 1*, &c. where the *feast of fat things* is prepared, *Isa. 25. 6*. His sitting at his table, or her sitting with him at it, imports familiar fellowship with him by the Gospel: So the table of the Lord is taken, *1 Cor. 10. 21*. and *Matth. 22. 4*. The comfortable fellowship, that is to be had with him by the Gospel, is held forth under the similitude of a great feast; as fellowship in glory, and enjoying of him there, is set out by eating and drinking with him *at his table*, *Luke 22. 29, 30*. Now, this is most friendly, when Christ not only furnishes a table, *Psal. 23. 5*. but he comes and sits down, and sups with them, and admits them to sup with him, *Rev. 3. 21*. it is called *His table*, because he both furnishes it, and is Master and Maker of the feast, yea, the matter of it also.

*2dly*, The effect of this fellowship is, *my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof*. Spikenard here signifies the graces of the Spirit, wherewith the believer is furnished out of the treasure of the sweet spices that are in Christ: which are compared to spikenard, because grace is precious in itself, and savoury and pleasant to God, *Psal. 141. 2*. and to others also, who have spiritual senses. To send forth the smell, is to be in lively exercise, and to be fresh and vigorous; grace, without smell or lively exercise, being like flowers somewhat withered that savour not, or like unbeaten spice, that sends not forth its savour.

*3dly*, There is the connexion of this effect (which is so comfortable to her) with Christ's presence, as the Cause: It is *while he sits, that her spikenard sendeth forth its smell*; it is then, and not else, that her graces flow: such influence hath his presence on her, as a cool-wind hath on a garden, for making the smell thereof to flow out, as it is *chap. 4. 16*.

Here observe, 1. Christ the Bridegroom is a King. 2. It makes all his condescending to sinners the more lovely, admirable and comfortable, that he is so excellent; that he, being such a King, sitteth at the table with poor believers, is much: Love in Christ brings his majesty, as it were, below itself, to feed and feast his poor people. 3. There is a way of most sweet and comfortable communion to be had even with the King, in his own ordinances. 4. There is a great difference betwixt an ordinance or duty, and Christ's presence in it; these are separable. 5. It is Christ present that makes a feast to a believer, and makes all Gospel-ordinances and duties so refreshful. 6. Believers may, and will observe, when Christ is at the table, and when not; and it will be empty to them when he is absent. 7. All the provision where-

with believers table is furnished, and they are feasted, is Christ. 8. Christ should have a continued dwelling in the believer, and they a continual conversing with him, as these who diet ordinarily at one table.

The effect (namely the flowing of her graces) and its connexion with his presence, as the cause, shews, 1. There is a stock of grace, and spikenard in them, with whom Christ useth to sup; and there is no other but such admitted to his table. 2. The graces of the Spirit, in believers, may be in a great part without savour, void of lively exercise, almost dead as to its effects. 3. It is exceedingly refreshful to believers, to have their graces flowing and acting. 4. Christ's presence hath much influence to make all things lively and savoury; where he sits, all things that are beside him (as it were) blossoms and favours: the graces of his people are then very fresh and lively. And, 5. Tho' grace be savoury in itself, yet in Christ's absence that savour will be restrained, and not sent forth; for it is implied, that when the King sat not at his table, her spikenard did not send forth its smell. 6. Christ's company, or fellowship with him, will not only be prized by believers, as it brings sensible comfort to them; but also as it revives their graces, and makes them lively.

Secondly, Her satisfaction in Christ's fellowship, *verses 13, 14.* is illustrate in two similitudes, whereby her holy fondness (to speak so) on him appears. The first similitude is, *a bundle of myrrhe*. Myrrhe was a precious and savoury spice, made use of in the *anointing oil*, Exod. 30. 23. and in embalming Christ's body: A bundle of it, signifies abundance of it, not a stalk or a grain, but a *bundle*, that must be of more worth and value than a lesser quantity. The second similitude, to the same scope, is, *a cluster of camphire*, or cypress; a sweet, odoriferous and precious wood in these parts; and a cluster of it, implies a congeries of it, having much of its excellency bound up together: And under these two similitudes (because one is not enough to set forth the thing) is understood a most precious, refreshful excellency which is to be found in Christ, and wherewith the most desirable excellency amongst the creatures being compared, he is much more excellent than they all: He is more sweet and precious than a cluster, even of that camphire which grows in the *vineyards of En-gedi*, where it is like the most precious of that kind grew. Now, these expressions hold forth, 1. Christ's preciousness. 2. His efficacy and vertue. 3. His abounding in both; the worth and vertue that is in him, cannot be comprehended, nor told. 4. The Bride's wisdom, in making use of such things to describe Christ; and her affection, in preferring him to all other things, and in satisfying her self in him; which is the last thing in these verses.

This respect of hers, or the warmth of her affection to him, is set forth  
two

two ways, 1<sup>st</sup>, In that expression, *he is unto me* (which is both in the beginning of the 13. and in the beginning of the 14. verse) whereby is signified, not only Christ's worth in general, but, 1. His favouriness and loveliness to her in particular; she speaks of him, as she her self had found him. 2. To express what room she gives him in her affection, he was lovely in himself, and he was so to her, and in her esteem; He is (saith she) a bundle of myrrhe *unto me*, a cluster of camphire *to me*: This is further clear from that other expression, namely, *he shall ly all night* (saith she) *betwixt my breasts*, even as one hugs and embraces whom they love, or what they love, and keeps it in their arms, and thrusts it in their bosom; so (saith she) my Beloved shall have my heart to rest in; and if one room be further in than another, there he shall be admitted. Which imports, 1. Great love to him. 2. A satisfying her spiritual senses on him. 3. Tenaciousness in keeping and retaining him, when he is gotten, and great lothness to quit or part with him. 4. It shews his right seat and place of residence; the bosom and heart is Christ's room and bed. 5. It shews a continuance in retaining him and entertaining him; she would do it, not for a start, but for all night. 6. A watchfulness in not interrupting his rest, or disquieting of him; He shall not be troubled (saith she) but he shall ly all night, unprovoked to depart. These are good evidences of affection to Christ, and offer ground for good directions how to walk under sensible manifestations, when he doth communicate himself.

#### Part 4. CHRIST'S Words.

Verse 15. *Behold, thou art fair, my Love; behold, thou art fair, thou hast doves eyes.*

These words contain a part of that excellent and comfortable conference between Christ and the Spouse: There is here a mutual commendation one of another, as if they were in a holy contest of love, who should have the last word in expressing of the other's commendation. In the verse before, the Bride hath been expressing her love to Christ, and he again comes in upon the back of this, expressing his esteem of her, and that with a behold, *Behold, &c.*

If ye look upon this verse in itself, and with its dependence on the former words, it will hold out these things; 1. That love-fellowship with Christ must be a very heartsom life: O the sweet, mutual satisfaction that is there! 2. That Christ must be a very loving and kindly husband; so have all they found him, that have been married unto him: And therefore, *Eph. 5. 27.* he is proposed as a pattern to all husbands, and may well be so. 3. That our Lord Jesus thinks good sometimes to intimate his love to believers, and to let them know what he thinks of them; and this he doth, that the believer may be

con-

confirmed in the faith of his love ; for this is both profitable, and also comfortable and refreshful. *Lastly*, From the connexion observe, that there is no time wherein Christ more readily manifests and intimates his love to believers, than when their love is most warm to him. In the former verse, she hath a room provided between her breasts for him ; and, in these words, our Lord comes in with a very refreshful salutation to her : for, tho' his love go before ours in the rise of it ; yet he hath ordered it so, that the intimation of his love to us, should be after the stirring of ours towards him, *Jo. 14. 21.*

In the commendation that he here gives her, consider these five particulars, 1. The title he gives her, *my love*. 2. The commendation itself, *Thou art fair*. 3. The note of attention prefixed, *Behold*. 4. The repetition of both. 5. A particular instance of a piece of that beauty he commends in her.

*1st*, The title is a very kindly and sweet one ; and this makes it lovely, that therein he not only intimates, but appropriates his love to her, allowing her to lay claim thereto as her own : *My love*, saith he ; and it says, that there can be nothing more cordial and refreshful to believers, than Christ's intimating of his love to them ; and therefore, he chooseth this very title for that end. The men of the world exceedingly prejudge themselves, that they think not more of this, and study not to be acquaint with it.

*2dly*, The commendation that he gives her, is, *Thou art fair*. If it be asked, what this imports ? we may look upon it these three ways ; 1. As it imports an inherent beauty in the Bride. 2. As it looks to the cleanness and beauty of her state, as being justified before God ; and this she hath, as being clothed with the righteousness of Christ. 3. As it holds forth Christ's loving estimation of her, that tho' there were many spots in her, yet he pronounces her *fair* (and lovely, because of his delight in her, and his purpose to make her fair) *and without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing*. From all which, these three truths may be gathered, 1. That such as are Christ's, or have a title to him, are very lovely creatures, and cannot but have in them exceeding great loveliness, because there is to be found with them a work of his grace, a new creature, and a conversation some way lavelled to the adorning of the Gospel. 2. Christ Jesus hath a very great esteem of his Bride : and tho' we cannot conceive of love in him, as it is in us ; yet the expressions used here give us ground to believe, that Christ hath a great esteem of believers, how worthless soever they be in themselves. *Lastly*, Comparing this with *verse 5.* we may see, that believers are never more beautiful in Christ's eyes, than when their own spots are most discernable to themselves ; and oft-times, when they are sharpest in censuring themselves, he is most ready to absolve and commend them.

The

The 3d thing is, the rousing note of attention which is prefixed ; and this is here added to the commendation of the Bride, for these reasons, which may be as observations ; 1. That he may shew the reality of that beauty that is in believers, that it is a very real thing. 2. That he may shew the reality of the estimation, which he hath of his Bride. 3. It imports a desire he had to make her believe, and a difficulty that was in bringing her to believe, either the beauty that was in her, or his estimation of her ; and therefore is this note of attention doubled. She hath her eyes so fixed on her own blackness, that she hath need to be roused up, to take notice both of the grace of God in her, and also of the esteem that Christ had of her.

The particular that he commends in her, in the last part of the word, is, *Thou hast doves eyes*. He insists not only in the general, but is particular in this commendation he gives her: And this shews, 1. Christ's particular observation, not only of the believer's state, frame and carriage, in general, but of their graces in particular. 2. That there may be some particular grace, wherein believers may be especially eminent ; even as it is in corrupt, natural men, that are still under the pollution and dominion of the body of death ; yet there is some one or other predominant lust that is strongest : In some sort it is so with the believer ; there is some one thing or other, wherein grace especially vents, and puts forth it self in exercise. *Abraham* is eminent for faith, *Moses* for meekness, *Job* for patience: And hence the believer is considered sometimes under the notion of one grace, and sometimes of another, as we may see, *Matth. 5.* 3. That our blessed Lord Jesus hath a particular delight in the holy simplicity and sincerity of a believer ; Or, holy simplicity and sincerity puts a great loveliness upon believers ; for, by this, *thou hast doves eyes*, we conceive to be understood a holy simplicity, separating her, in her way, from the way of the men of the world : for, while their eyes or affections run after other objects, hers are taken up with Christ ; for, by eyes, are set out mens affections in scripture ; so, *Matth 6. 22.* and often in this Song, the eyes signify the affections, as in that expression, *Thou hast ravished me with one of thine eyes*, &c. the eyes being someways the seat and also the doors of the affections. Now, *doves eyes* set out not only the Bride's affection, and love to Christ, but also the nature of her love, which is the thing here mainly commended ; as simplicity, chastity and singleness, for which that creature is commended, *Matth. 10. Be simple as doves*. And this is the commendation of the love that true believers have to Christ, that it is chaste, single and sincere love : Singleness is the special thing Christ commends in his people ; it is that for which believers are so much commended, *Acts 2. 46.*

## Part 5. BRIDE's Words.

Verse 16. *Behold thou art fair, my Beloved, yea, pleasant : also our bed is green.*

Verse 17. *The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.*

We come to the last part of the chapter, in the two last verses, in which the Bride commends Christ's beauty, and the sweetness of fellowship with him : He had been commending her, and now she hastens to get the commendation turned over on him, *Behold, thou art fair, &c.* And there are two things which she here commends ; 1. She commends the Bridegroom himself, *Behold, thou, &c.* 2. She commends fellowship with him, under the similitude of *bed, house and galleries*, verses 16. 17. From the connexion of this with the former purpose, ye may see how restless believers are, when they meet with any commendation from Christ, till they get it turned over to his commendation and praise : and this is the property of a believer, to be improving every good word they get from Christ, to his own commendation that speaks it : this is the end and design why grace is bestowed upon believers, that it may turn in the upshot and issue to the commendation of his grace. 2. That there is nothing more readily warms the hearts of believers, with love, and looses their tongues in expressions of commending Christ, than the intimation of his love to them ; this makes their tongue as the *pen of a ready writer*, Psal. 45. 1.

More particularly, in this commendation the Bride gives him, ye will find these four things ; 1. There is the stile she gives him, *my Beloved.* 2. There is the commendation given, and it is the same with the commendation which in the former verse he gave her. 3. The note of attention prefixed, *Behold.* Lastly, An addition to the commendation Christ gave her, while she turns it over upon him, and which is as a qualification of Christ's beauty ; because one expression will not do it, she makes use of two, *thou art fair* (saith she) *yea, pleasant* : He had said she was fair, nay (saith she) thou art fair, &c. she turns it over to him, because the same things that are commendable in her, are infinitely and much more commendable in him ; that which is in the believer, being the extract of the principal which is in him ; Christ being the principal, and the graces that are in the believer but the transumpt or copy : all these things are in Christ like the light in the sun, and in the believer but like the light in the moon, communicate to it by the sun ; and they are in Christ as in their own element and ocean, and in the believer but like some little stream communicate from that infinite fountain ; and it is upon this ground,

ground, that the same commendation given by Christ to her, is turned over by her to him : and it is even as much as if she had said to him, *My beloved, what is my fairness? It is thou who art fair, I am not worthy to be reckoned fair; the commendation belongs to thee, thou art worthy of it.* And this is the nature of love in believers, to blush ( in a manner ) when Christ commends them, and to cast all such commendations back again upon him, that they may rest upon Christ, as the party who deserves them best.

From the title ye may see here, 1. Much humility in the Bride, and also much reverence and respect to Christ; which is the reason why she will not let the commendation ly upon her, but puts it back upon him. Love to Christ, and estimation of him, aims always at this, that whatever is commendable in the believer, should ultimately resolve upon him. 2. Here is much familiarity, notwithstanding of her humility, in that she calls him *my beloved*, as he called her *my love*. Humility and reverence, an high estimation of Christ, and confidence in him, and familiarity with him, go all well together in the believer ; and the believer would labour to have all these in exercise together, and would never let one of them part from another. In a word, it is a humble familiar way in believing, which we would aim at. 3. One special thing that makes Christ lovely to believers, and natively stirreth them up to commend him, is when they are clear anent his love to them.

If it be asked, why she turns over this commendation to him in the second person, *Thou art*, &c. ? *Ans.* She doth it, 1. To testify her sincerity, that she was not flattering nor complementing, but she durst make him witness of what she said. 2. To shew that there are many spiritual conferences, and sweet soliloquies between the souls of believers and Christ, wherein they are very familiar with him, which none knows, nor can know, but Christ and they ; for, she is speaking to him when no body knows, and he to her. 3. Because there are many divine experiences of believers, that are scarcely communicable to any other, but Christ : and therefore she will tell them over to him.

The commendation she puts upon him, is even the same which he before gave her ; *Thou art fair*, saith she: And that which she aims at in this, is, 1. To set forth the exceeding great beauty that is in our Lord Jesus ; which beauty is spiritually to be understood, namely of the qualifications wherewith he is furnished, having grace *poured into his lips*, Psal. 45. 2. *Jo.* 1. 14. 2. The great esteem that the believer hath of Christ, and that both for what he is in himself, and for what he is to him: *Thou art fair* in thy self (saith she) and *fair* to me ; and it says, a little glimpse of Christ's beauty hath an attractive efficacy upon the heart of a believer : when Christ Jesus is seen, it puts a wonderful stamp of love upon the hearts of his people ; he hath a very amiable aspect, that cannot but get love in the beholders: As they said

that heard him, Never man spake as he speaks ; so they that have seen him, will say, Never man's countenance looked like his ; amongst all the sons of men he bears the standard, and hath a loveliness wherein he is beyond them all : No wonder, he being *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person.* 3. It is to shew, wherefrom all her beauty was derived (as was hinted before) it was from his ; *If I be fair, (saith she) it is because thou art fair ; it is thy beauty that puts beauty upon me.*

The 3d thing is the *Behold* prefixed, and it holds out these three ; 1. The excellency and admirableness of the matter : Christ's beauty is a subject of a most transcendent and admirable excellency. 2. Her seriousness in the expressions of his commendation, as having her heart at her mouth, while she speaks of it, being so affected and taken up with it. 3. Though he needed not, yet she needed up-stirring, her self : and there was need she should stir up others ; and therefore this word, for her own, and others cause, is prefixed.

The last part of this commendation, is (as was said) an addition to what he spoke in her commendation ; *yea, pleasant, saith she* : This pleasantness and loveliness doth relate to the communicativeness of Christ's worth, his communicating of what is lovely in him to others : It had not been enough for us, that he had been lovely in himself as God, if he were not also lovely by that relation that is between him and a believer in the covenant of grace, whereby there is not only a communicableness, but also an actual communication of these things to a believer, which may make him lovely and beautiful before God. And this makes Christ pleasant, that of *his fulness we receive, and grace for grace*, Jo. 1. 16. When the believer shares of Christ's fulness, he cannot but be beautiful, and Christ cannot but be pleasant. And indeed, if we could express any thing of the importance of the word, it is a most material and massy expression, of that inexpressible worth that is in him, and likewise of a believer's estimation of it : And, 1. In the general, it imports this, A difficulty in commending Christ rightly : there cannot be words gotten for it ; the thing that is commendable in him, is so large, that words, yea, the most superlative of them, come far short of setting him forth. 2. It sets forth, how unsatisfied believers are with their own expressions of that worth, which they see to be in him ; they think the first word unsuitable, and therefore they pass on to another ; and, in the close, they are forced as it were to give it over, and to say, *Thou art altogether lovely.* 3. It imports, that there is no kind of thing that may commend Christ, wherein he is defective ; he hath not only the materials of beauty (so to say) but he hath the form. All things that are in Christ, are wonderfully delightfom and pleasant to look on. Lastly, This expression implies an exceeding great refreshfulness and contentedness, which Christ Jesus doth yield to a believer ; and that exceeding great

great satisfaction and delight, that a believer may have, in looking on Christ. This word *pleasant*, speaks their actual feeding upon the beautiful sight they have gotten of him; so that they cannot be withdrawn from it. Must not Christ be lovely, when his people get eyes to see him? And must it not be a heartsome life, to be in heaven, where they behold him, who is fair and lovely, as he is, and have their eyes fixed on him for ever, when he is so beautiful even here-away, where we see him but darkly, through a glass, and much of his beauty is veiled from our eyes?

That which follows, is the enlargement of the Bride's commendation of Jesus Christ, as he is called a *beloved* or husband; for she follows that allegory in commending his *bed, house, and galleries*: And this is the scope, to shew how excellent and stately a Husband he was. And, 2. How happy and comfortable a life his Bride had, in communion and fellowship with him. In the words these three are to be cleared, 1. What is commended, as *bed, house, &c.* 2. The several commendations given to these. 3. The title of claim, or relation under which they are commended, *Our bed, &c.*

That which is commended, is expressed by three words; 1. *Bed.* 2. The *beams of the house.* 3. *Rafters.* In sum, it is this, That as husbands (who are in good condition) have beds to solace in with their Brides, houses to dwell in, and galleries to walk in, for their refreshing, and have these excellently adorned, according to their rank; so our blessed husband excels in these. By *bed*, is understood the special means of nearest fellowship with, and enjoying of Christ; the bed being the place of rest, and of the nearest fellowship between the Bridegroom and the Bride.

Its commendation is, that it is *green*: that is, 1. Refreshful, like the spring. 2. Fruitful; and so the similitude of greenness is opposed to a disconsolate, barren, unfruitful condition, *Psal.* 92. 12, 13. and *Jer.* 17. 8. So then, that which is here pointed at, is, that nearness with Christ is both exceeding heartsome and refreshful, and also hath much influence on believers, to keep them fresh, and make them fruitful.

The second thing commended, is, *the beams of the house*: The *house* is of a larger extent than the *bed*; it signifies the Church, wherein Christ dwells with his Bride: The beams of it are the ordinances, word, sacraments, promises of the covenant, &c. whereby the house is both compacted together, and sustained; there being no living with Christ, nor fellowship with him, without these. The commendation is, that it is of *cedar*. 1. Cedar was a durable wood. 2. Excellent and precious, *chap.* 3. 10. 3. It was typical of Christ, and therefore used in the ceremonial services: So this commendation holds forth the excellent nature of the ordinances and promises, being of great worth, precious and perpetual in their use to the Church, while upon earth; but it

doth especially hold forth the eternal excellency and worth, and the durable power and strength of Christ, the main corner-stone of this building, *Eph. 2. 20, 22.*

The third word is, *rafters* : It is on the margent, *galleries* ; and so we take it, being rendred so, *chap. 7. 5.* The word signifies to run alongst : and the scope here, is, to shew what pleasant walks there are with Christ ; or, how pleasant a thing it is to walk with him, as to dwell with him, and ly, or bed with him. So, to walk with him, must needs be pleasant : and this metaphor (with the rest) is here made use of, it being ordinary in this Song, under such expressions, to hold forth the love-fellowship, that is betwixt Christ and his Church. Now, these galleries are said to be of *sir*, or *cypress*, a durable wood : this word is not elsewhere in scripture ; but the scope shews, it is some fine thing, and points out the unspeakable satisfaction and pleasure which is to be had in a life of walking with him.

3. She claims title to all these, *bed, house, galleries* : she saith not, *thy bed*, nor *my bed* (whereby, *chap. 3.* she signifies her own carnal ease and rest) but *our bed, our house, &c.* whereby she points at somewhat which both of them had joint interest in, and did together converse into ; altho' her interest be communicate from him, yet she keeps the manner of speech suitable to husband and wife.

These words shew, 1. That there be several degrees of fellowship with Christ, and several ways and means for entertaining of it : some more near, as when he lay betwixt her breasts ; some more mediate, when (as it were) he and she only live together in the house : which may point at her trading with Christ in the ordinances, but without sensible manifestations ; and also believers walking with him in their ordinary callings, even when they are not in duties of immediate worship, which is signified by *galleries*. 2. Any of these degrees and means of fellowship are excellent in themselves, and to be pressed and sought after by the believer. 3. The nearest mean of fellowship with Christ is most refreshful to spiritual sense, the *bed* more than the *house*. 4. Yet, tho' it be so, believers would not divide them ; but would think much of all the means and ordinances, even as long as they abide here. 5. There is a mutual relation betwixt Christ and his Bride, which gives a mutual interest in, and relation to all that is his : Whatever is his, it is *ours* ; his *bed* is *ours*, his *house* *ours*, &c. Believers, that can lay claim to Christ, may and should claim interest in all that is his. 7. This makes every dispensation lovely, and every step of our walk heartsom, when, under every dispensation, and in every step of our walk, we are living a life of fellowship with Christ : to be spending all our time in lying, dwelling and walking with Christ, O how sweet a life were that ! 8. The means of fellowship with Christ, in all places and times,

times, are so well contrived, and so large and refreshful, as they contribute exceedingly to make a believer cheerful in all duties of worship, and in all his conversation : For we here see, there are *bed, house and galleries* provided, in order to her keeping company with Christ.



## C H A P. II.

### Part I. CHRIST's Words.

Verse 1. *I am the Rose of Sharon, and the Lilie of the valleys.*

Verse 2. *As the lilie among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.*

**T**His second chapter contains the same scope, and runs in the same strain with the former. It hath two principal parts : In the *first*, Christ speaks in the first two verses ; in the *second*, the Bride continues to the end.

Again, in these two verses, Christ doth *first* commend himself, *verse 1.* Secondly, He describes his Bride, *verse 2.*

That it is he who speaks, appears thus ; 1. It is clear, at first looking upon the words, that he speaks in the second verse ; and who else can be thought to speak in the first ? He is the *I* in the first verse, who claims the Bride by this possessive particle *my* in the second. 2. The words, *I am the Rose of Sharon*, &c. are stately, becoming him alone to speak them ; like these, *I am the true vine*, *I am the bread of life*, &c. And so majestick is the commendation, that it can agree to none other but to him. 3. The Bride's work is to commend him, and not her self, especially with a commendation beyond what he giveth her, *ver. 2.* and therefore the first verse must be Christ's words, not hers.

The scope is (for her instruction and comfort now in affliction) that he may make her know himself : The very knowing of Christ is comfortable ; and it is one of the most excellent, rare and ravishing things he can shew his Bride, to shew her himself, or to make her know him : neither can he choose a subject more profitable in itself, or more welcome to her, to insist on, than to display his own beauty, whereby she may see her blessedness in such a match.

In the first verse, then, Christ comes in commending himself, *I am the Rose of Sharon, and the Lilie of the valleys.* The rose is a sweet favouring flower, and so is the lilie : *Sharon* and the *valleys* are added, because these roses and lilies that grew there, were the best that were to be found. He is said to be

that

that *Rose*, or *the Rose*, and *the Lillie*, as if there were no other, to distinguish him as excellent and singular from all others. He thus sets forth himself, to shew, 1. That Christ Jesus hath a most lovely savour, and a most delightful and refreshful smell, to them that have spiritual senses to discern what is in him. 2. That there is nothing refreshful in creatures, but it is more eminently and infinitely in him; therefore he is called *the Rose* and *the Lillie*. 3. That whatever excellency is in Christ, is singularly and incomparably in him: There is no other rose, or lillie, but he; and what excellency is to be found in others, doth not deserve the name, being compared with him. 4. That he is never suitably commended, till he be lifted up above all. 5. That none can commend Christ to purpose, but himself; he takes it therefore on him, *I am*, &c. He can indeed commend himself effectually, and none but he can do it. 6. That he manifests more of his loveliness to these who have gotten a begun sight and esteem of it; for she had been commending it formerly, and now he discovers more of it to her. 7. That it is one of Christ's greatest favours to his Bride, and one of the special effects of his love, to set out himself as lovely to her, and to bear-in his loveliness upon her heart; and this is the scope here.

In the second verse, he describes his Bride. Here we have these things to consider; 1. What she is, a *lillie*. 2. What others of the world beside are, called here the *daughters* (so men without the Church are to the Church, and corrupt men in the Church are to believers) that is, daughters of their mother the world; no kindly daughters to her, they are *thorns*. 3. The posture of Christ's Spouse, she is *as a lillie among thorns*; a strange posture and soil for our Lord's love and lillie to grow in.

The *lillie* is pleasant, savoury and harmless; *thorns* are worthless, unpleasant and hurtful. The lillie's being compared with them, and placed amongst them, sets out both her excellency above them, and her sufferings from them. In general, observe, (1.) Christ draws his own beauty and the Bride's together, thereby to shew their kindred and fitness (so to speak:) She is not rightly taken up, but when she is looked upon as standing by him; and he not fully set forth, nor known, without her. (2.) He took two titles to himself, and he gives one of them to the Bride, the *lillie*; but with this difference, that he is *the lillie*, she *as*, or *like the lillie*: Setting forth, 1. Wherein her beauty consists; it is in likeness to him. 2. From whom it comes, it is from him; her being his *love*, makes like the lillie. 3. The nearness of the mystical union that is between Christ and his Bride; it is such, that thereby they some way share names, *Jer.* 23. 6. and *chap.* 33. 16. (3.) He intermixes her beauty and crosses together, drawing them on one table, to give her a view of both: and that for her humbling, and also for her comfort: It is not good for believers, to look only to the one without the other. More

More particularly, observe, 1. Christ's Bride is very lovely and beautiful. 2. The children of the world are natively hurtful to her. 3. In Christ's account the believer is exceedingly preferable to all others, of whatsoever place or qualifications in the world. 4. Christ's relation and affection doth not always keep off outward afflictions from his own Bride. 5. It is native to believers to have a crossed life in the world, their plantation here *among thorns* speaks it. 6. That the crosses are of more kinds than one, which believers are environed with; thorns grow on all hands beside Christ's lillie. 7. Holiness and innocency will not always prevent wrongs and injuries from others; *thorns* will wrong even the *lillie*. 8. Christ observes here, how she looks in her sufferings, and so he takes special notice how his people carry in a suffering lot. 9. It is commendable to keep clean under sufferings, and to be lillie-like, even amongst thorns.

## Part 2. BRIDE's Words.

Verse 3. *As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.*

The second part of the chapter may be sub-divided in two, *First*, From the 3d verse, the Bride comes in speaking as in a lively frame, to verse 8. 2. From that to the end, she speaks as being at some distance with the Bridegroom.

In the first part, (1.) She commends Christ, and lays down this commendation, as the ground of her consolation, *verse 3*. (2.) She proves it by her experience, *ibid*. (3.) Explains the way of her coming to that experience, *verse 4*. (4.) She cries out under the sense of it, *verse 5*. (5.) She shews his tender care of her in that condition, *verse 6*. And *lastly*, expresseth her fear, lest there should be any change to the worse in her condition, and her care to prevent it, *verse 7*.

The dependence of the third verse upon the second, is clear: She takes the commendation out of Christ's mouth, which he gave her, and after that same manner almost turns it over on him, as she had done, *chap. 1. 16*. and then comforts her self in him? Hath she crosses? then he hath a shadow to hide her; and with this she settles her self, and doth not complain of her sufferings. Hence observe, 1. There is no staying of the heart against afflictions, but in Christ. 2. It is better for believers to insist in commending him, than describing their crosses.

Here there is, 1. The Bride's esteem of the children of the world, called here the *sons*; they are like wild barren trees, that give no fruit or comfort:

The

The world is exceeding little worth, especially to these who know Christ. 2. Her esteem of Christ, he is like the *apple-tree* : There is a great odds betwixt Christ and all the world ; there is ever fruit to be found on him, and a shadow in him. This is proven by her experience (for they that have felt and tasted how sweet he is, can speak somewhat to this) I encountered with many difficulties, says she, like scorplings of the sun (See on *chap. 1. verse 5.*) and could find no shelter nor refreshment amongst the creatures ; but I resolved to make use of Christ by faith, in reference to them (even as men do, by interposing a tree betwixt them and the heat, that they may have a shadow) and I found refreshing and ease, by the benefits and privileges that flow from Christ, and are purchased by him, and are enjoyed by virtue of an interest in him ; which were very comfortable, even as sweet apples from an apple-tree are refreshful to one sitting under its shadow in a great heat.

*Obs.* 1. Believers may be scorched with outward and inward heat ; they may be exercised not only with sharp outward afflictions, but also with the sense of God's wrath, and with the fiery darts of Satan's temptations. 2. Christ is a complete shadow, and a cure for all. 3. They that would find Christ a shadow from the heat, must make use of him, and employ him for that end ; they must *sit down*, &c. 4. Believers never flee to his shadow, till some heat scorch them ; for her being scorched with heat, is supposed here, as that which made the shadow refreshful. 5. Faith in Christ will compose the believer in the midst of the greatest difficulties ; it will *set them down*, &c. yea, and delight them also. 6. Much of the nature and exercise of faith, in its use-making of Christ, appears in its interposing of Christ betwixt us and wrath, or whatever may be troublesome to us, and in the quieting of our selves upon that ground ; for this is it that is meant by *sitting down under his shadow*. 7. There are many choice and excellent fruits in Christ, that flow from him to believers. 8. All the spiritual benefits and privileges that believers enjoy, are Christ's fruits ; they are his fruits by purchase and right, and by him communicate to believers. 9. Believers eat and feed, and may with his blessed allowance do so upon what is his. 10. Christ's fruits are exceeding sweet, when they are eaten ; they are satisfyingly, and, as it were, sensibly sweet. 11. These sweet fruits are neither eaten, nor the sweetness of them felt by believers, till they go to Christ's shadow, and sit down delightfully under his righteousness ; then they become refreshful.

**Verse 4.** *He brought me to the banqueting-house, and his banner over me was love.*

She proceeds in expressing her cheerful condition, by shewing the way of her access to it, *verse 4. He brought me*, &c. Wherein, *First*, She sets out the

sweet-

See Page 164th 89

sweetness of the enjoyment of Christ's sensible love, by comparing it to a feast, or house of wine. 2dly, She tells who it was that brought her to it, *He brought me.* 3dly, The manner how she was brought to it; it was by the out-letting of his love, *His banner (saith she) over me was love.* The first expression sets forth three things, 1. The great abundance of satisfying and refreshing blessings that are to be found in Christ; such abundance of provision as useth to be laid up at a feast, or in a banqueting-house. 2. His liberal allowance thereof to his own, who for that end hath laid up this provision for them. 3. The nature of the entertainment; it is a feast of the best and most cordial things, a house of wine. The second is, *He*, that is, Christ brought me in: It shews, 1. Believers impotency to enter in there of themselves, and their want of right, that may give them access to the blessings that are laid up in Christ. 2. That it is Christ who makes their access; he purchased an entry by his death, he applies his purchase by his Spirit, and dispenseth it by his office, and so brings them in. 3. It suppones a freedom of grace in the bringing them in; they are brought in by his mere favour. 4. It contains a thankful remembrance or acknowledgment of this deed of Christ's, and an holding of this favour of him. The third holds forth the manner how she is brought in; it is under a banner of love: A stately manner; it was love that brought her in. The expression implieth, that not only it was love that moved him to bring her in, but that he did it in a loving manner, which amplifieth and heightens his love: She comes in marching, as it were, in triumph, having love like a banner, or colours, adorning this march, and making way for her entry; so that, even in the manner of her being brought in, the general, predominant, visible thing (as it were) that appeared, was love. Observe, 1. Christ will sometimes bring his people in to the sense of his love, exceeding lovingly and kindly, even as to the manner of ingaging them. 2. Believers would observe his way with them. 3. This loving manner, in the way of his dealing with his people, doth exceedingly commend his love, and is an heightning consideration of it. 4. Christ's love is in itself a most stately and triumphant thing. 5. It is only the love of Christ, that secures believers, in their battles and march, against their spiritual adversaries; and indeed they may fight, who have love for their colours and banner.

Verse 5. *Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.*

She is almost overcome with this banquet, and therefore cries out for help, verse 5. Here consider, 1. The case she is in. 2. The cure she calls for. 3. From whom she seeks it.

Her case is, That she is *sick of love*. This is not to be taken for the fainting of a soul under absence, and the want of sense; all the context before and after, and the scope, will shew it is otherwise with her: But it is a sickness from the weight and pressure of felt inconceivable love, damishing her (as it were) and weakning her; she cannot abide that sight and fulness which she enjoys.

2dly, The cure she desires confirms this; *Stay me* (saith she) or support me, for I am like to fall under it: And *comfort me*; the word is, strengthen me, or *bed me*, *straw me* with, or in apples; let me ly down amongst them. The first expression looks to the house of wine where she was; which suppones no want, and may be rendred, *Stay me in flagons*, as seeking support in this holy fill of the Spirit, whereby she was staggering. The second looks to the apple-tree, *verse 3.* and she would ever roll her self amongst the apples that come from this tree; and like the disciples, *Matth. 17. 4.* saith (as it were) *It is good to be here*: She would even be fixed and ly down in that posture, never to part with this happy condition again.

3dly, These she speaks to, and from whom she seeks help, are expressed in the plural number (as is clear in the Original) which shews a ravishment and kind of rapture in this exclamation; not observing to whom she speaks, but expressing her delight in that which she enjoyed, yet mainly intending Christ (as the disciples did, *Matth. 17.* not knowing what they said) for it is he who applies the cure in the next verse.

*Obs.* 1. Love will have a great out-letting at sometimes beyond others, as if a dam were gathered, and then letten out. 2. Sense of love in a high degree will straiten and weight a believer, as overburdening and overpowering him, so as he is put to say, Hold, and *Wo's me*, as it is, *Isa. 6. 5.* the nature of God's presence is such, and our infirmity so unsuitable thereto. 3. Love is lovely, when the believer is almost dotting with it, and staggering under the weight and power of it. 4. It can cure even the same sickness it makes: These *flagons* and *apples* are the only remedy, tho' our bottles be now weak, and can hold but little of this new wine.

**Verse 6.** *His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.*

She expresseth Christ's care of her in this condition, *verse 6.* as a most loving husband, he sustains her in his arms, in this swoon and swarf, which from joy she falls in, as the words do plainly bear. *Obs.* 1. Christ's love is a sensible sustaining thing, and is able to support the heart under its greatest weakness. 2. As Christ is tender of all his people, and at all times, so especially when

when they are in their fits of love-sickness. 3. As believers would observe Christ's love at all times, so especially when they are weakest: for then they will find it both seasonable and profitable so to do.

Verse 7. *I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my Love, till he please.*

This verse contains her care to entertain this condition, and the way she takes for that end. That they are the Bride's words, is, *first*, clear from the scope and matter. *2dly*, From the expressions she useth, speaking of him, *my Love*, and *till he please*; for it becomes us to give Christ his own liberty in staying or going, and it were not our good that our pleasure were the rule in our fellowship with him. Now, in order to the securing of this comfortable condition to her self, *First*, She adjures and charges, which is, 1. To shew the concernment of the thing. 2. Her seriousness in it; for she is in very great earnest. 3. A fear of misguiding this condition. 4. A difficulty so to prevent the hazard, as to keep all quiet.

*Secondly*, The parties she speaks to, while she thus adjures, are the *daughters of Jerusalem*, giving them the lesson she would take to her self, because they had need to be thus guarded. *Obs.* 1. That professors are in hazard to marr their own enjoyments, and to interrupt an intimate fellowship with Christ. 2. Beginners are readiest to fall in this sin. 3. Seriousness will stir up believers to be watchful over themselves, and will make them press others to be so also.

This expression, *by the roes and hinds of the field*, is but added, for keeping the strain of this Song (which is composed in an allegorick way, and every similitude is not to be narrowly searched into) and to shew how tenderly they ought to watch, to prevent this hazard, as men having to do with *roes*, who are soon stirred: Shewing, that a little thing may stir up Christ, and marr the comfortable fellowship that is between him and his people.

*Thirdly*, The charge itself is, That *they stir not up, nor awake the Beloved*; as a wife would say (when her husband is come home and resting in her arms) Be quiet all, and let no din be in the house to awake him: And this charge reaches her self, as well as others: when she, as the mother, commands all the little-ones or children (as it were) to be quiet, that Christ may not be stirred up, and made to remove; she ought to be much more careful in this her self. Hence observe, 1. If a sensible presence be not tenderly entertained, it will not last. 2. Believers would be most careful then, when they are admitted to near and sensible fellowship with Christ, that nothing may fall out which may provoke him to depart. 3. The least sinful motions and stirrings

of corruption would be suppressed, as having a great tendency to provoke and stir up the Beloved to be gone.

*Lastly*, This charge is qualified in these words, *till he please*: Which does not imply, that she gives them leave at any time to stir him up; but the meaning is, See that by your fault he be not awaked, till his own time come. Observe then, 1. Christ guides his visits and love-manifestations, by his sovereignty and *pleasure*. 2. He may withdraw from his people without respect to any particular provocation, as having sinful influence thereupon. 3. Christ's pleasure is believers rule, in the things that are most precious to them: Here she acquiesces, even to his withdrawing, when he shall please. 4. Believers may have peace, and be quiet under absence, if they have not sinfully provoked Christ to withdraw: For, this is the thing the Bride aims at, as to her self, in this her care. 5. Often believers are guilty in marring Christ's fellowship with them before he please, and they might enjoy Christ's company much longer oftentimes, if they did not sin him out of house and doors.

*Verse 8. The voice of my Beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.*

*Verse 9. My Beloved is like a roe, or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattices.*

These words contain a case of the Bride's, different from her case in the former words; there she was in Christ's arms, here she sees him afar off; there she was endeavouring to keep him still, here she is sensible that he is away, and, *verse ult.* is praying for his return. Observe then from the connexion, The most satisfying and comfortable conditions of a believer, while upon earth, are not abiding; even the Bride must experience distance, as well as presence. 2. Sometimes sensible presence will not continue, even when believers are most careful to retain it, as we find she was in the words before.

Her distance hath two steps, 1. There are some views of Christ, and some intercourse with him, tho' afar off, in this chapter. Then, 2. She is deprived even of that, in the first part of the chapter following: And readily distance once begun, doth proceed from a lesser to a greater degree, before it be removed.

More particularly, we would observe here, (1.) What is Christ's carriage, when the Bride doth not enjoy sensible presence in so lively a way; and that in two things, 1. What he is doing; he is *coming, leaping, standing behind the wall, looking through the lattices, &c.* 2. What he is saying; he is *speaking to her,*

her, and, as it were, writing kind love-letters to her at that same time : Christ is both doing and speaking kindly to a believer, even when he is away to sense, if it be well discerned. (2.) We may see what is the Bride's carriage suitable to his, in four steps (worthy to be imitate by believers, for their own peace, in their disconsolate condition) 1. She observes what he doth, tho' it be but a twilight discovery she hath of him. 2. She records what he saith, and reads his epistle often over. 3. She comforts her self in keeping the faith of her interest, and the hope of future enjoying of him, clear: And 4. Prays, in the mean time, for some manifestations of his love, till that come. The first is, *ver. 8 and 9.* The second, *ver. 10 to 16.* The third, *ver. 16 and 17.* The fourth in the close of the 17 *verse.*

In her observation of Christ's way with her, *ver. 8.* consider, 1. His practice, which she observes. 2. Her observation of it. 3. How she is affected with it. And lastly, her expression of it.

The first of these is contained in these words, *He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.* There are four things here to be taken notice of: *First,* A supposed distance; for when he is said to be coming, he is not present: This distance is not in reality, as to the union that is betwixt Christ and a believer, that is always the same; but it is to be understood as to the sense of his presence, which may be interrupted. *2dly,* It is said, *he cometh:* Coming imports his drawing near to remove the distance, as being already on his way. Observe, 1. It is his coming that removes the distance between him and his people: the first motion of love is still on his side. And, 2. Even when Christ is absent, if he were well seen, he is making way for our nearer union with him, and is upon his way coming again, *John 14.* 3. Even when he is away he is still coming, tho' it may be afterward the distance seem to grow greater, and the night of absence darker. The *third* thing is, That there are mountains which he comes over, that is, something standing betwixt him and us, marring our access to him, and his familiarity with us, till he remove it, as mountains obstruct mens way in travel; and so difficulties in the way of God's work are compared to mountains, *Zech. 4. 7.* *Who art thou, O great mountain?* So here, as there are difficulties to be removed, before the union betwixt Christ and us be made up; so also there are particular sins, clouds of guiltiness, which must be removed, ere his presence can be restored after he goeth away. Again, coming over mountains, maketh one conspicuous and glorious afar off: So Christ's march and return to a believer is ever in triumph, over some great ground of distance, which makes him discernably glorious. *4thly,* Christ is said to be *leaping and skipping;* which imports, 1. An agility in him, and a facility to overcome whatever is in the way. 2. A cheerfulness and heartiness in doing of it; He comes with delight  
over

over the highest hill that is in his way, when he returns to his people. 3. It holds forth speediness; Christ comes quickly, and he is never behind his time: he cannot mistrust a believer; his term-day is their necessity, and be sure he will meet with them then. 4. It imports a beauty, majesty and stateliness in his coming, as one in triumph; and so he comes triumphantly, and in great state: And what is more stately than Christ's triumphing over principalities and powers, and making a shew of them openly, by overcoming the difficulties in his way to his Bride.

The second thing in the verse, is her observation of this; Christ in his way is very discernable to any that is watchful, and believers should observe his way when absent, as well as present. If it be asked, how she discerned it? There is no question, faith is here taking up Christ, according to his promise, *John 14. 3. If I go away, I will come again*; and faith lays hold on this. Faith is a good friend in desertion; for, as we may here see, it speaks good of Christ, even behind his back; when sense would say, *he will return no more*, faith says, *he is coming*, and prophesies good of Christ, as there is good reason.

The third thing is, how she is affected with it: This observation proves very comfortable to her, as her abrupt and cutted expression imports, *The voice of my Beloved!* as also, the *Behold* she puts to it: which shews, 1. That her heart was much affected with it. 2. That she thought much of it. 3. That it was some way wonderful that Christ was coming, even over all these difficulties, to her: there is no such ravishing wonder to a sensible believing sinner, as this, that Christ will pass by all its sins, yea, take them all on himself, and come over all difficulties unto them; therefore is this *behold* added here.

The fourth thing in her expression of this, which confirms the former, and it is such as sets out a heart, as it were, surprized and overcome with the sight of a coming friend. Hence *Obs.* 1. A sinner's thoughts of a coming Christ, will be deeply affecting; and these thoughts of him are mis-shapen, and of no worth, that do not in some measure cast fire into, and inflame the affections. And, 2. A heart, suitably affected with the power of Christ's wonderful grace and love, will be expressing somewhat of it to others, as the Bride is doing here.

In the 9th verse, the observation of his carriage is continued: where, 1. He is commended. 2. His carriage is described, with her observation of it. The commendation she gives him, is, *He is like a roe, or a young hart*: These creatures are famous, for loving and kindly carriage to their mates, as also for loveliness and pleasantness in themselves, *Prov. 5. 19*. Thus he is kindly and loving. O so kind as Christ is to his Church and chosen! *Jonathan's* love to *David* past the love of women, but this surpasseth that, beyond all degrees of comparison. 2. He is timeous and seasonable, in fulfilling his purposes of love

love to his Bride ; no roe or hart, for swiftneſs, is like him in this : and this may be the ground from which ſhe concludeth that he was coming and leaping in the former words, becauſe Chriſt's affections, and way of manifeſting them, is ſuch as this.

2. His carriage is ſet forth in three ſteps, held forth in allegorick expreſſions. The 1<sup>ſt</sup> is, *He ſtands behind our wall*, that is, as a lovely huſband may withdraw from the ſight of his ſpouſe, for a time, and yet not be far away, but behind a wall, and there ſtanding to ſee what will be her carriage, and to be ready to return ; or, as nurſes will do with their little children, to make them ſeek after them ; ſo, ſays ſhe, tho' Chriſt now be out of ſight, yet he is not far off, but, as it were, behind the wall ; and it is called *our wall*, in reference to ſome other ſhe ſpeaks with, of him ; and a *wall*, becauſe often we build up theſe ſeparations our ſelves, betwixt him and us (*Iſa. 59. 1.*) that hides Chriſt, as a wall hides one man from another ; yet, even then, Chriſt goes not away, but waits to be gracious, as weary with forbearing. There is much love on Chriſt's ſide, in ſaddeſt deſertions, and our hand is often deep in his withdrawings : it is ſad, when the wall that hides him, is of our building ; there is often nothing betwixt him and us, but our own ſin.

The 2<sup>d</sup> ſtep is, *He looketh forth at the window* ; which is to the ſame purpoſe. The meaning is, though I get not a full ſight of him, yet he opens, as it were, a window, and looks out, and I get ſome little glance of his face. Sometimes Chriſt will neither (as it were) let the believer in to him, nor will he come out to them ; yet he will make windows, as it were, in the wall, and give blinks of himſelf unto them.

The 3<sup>d</sup> ſtep is, *He ſhews himſelf through the lattices* ; that is, as there are ſome windows that have tireſſes or lattices on them, by which men will ſee clearly, and yet be but in a little meaſure ſeen ; ſo, ſays ſhe, Chriſt is beholding us, though we cannot take him up fully ; yet the ſmalleſt bore, whereby Chriſt manifeſts himſelf, is much, and to be acknowledged. All this ſhe obſerves with a *Behold*, as diſcerning ſomething wonderful in all theſe ſteps : Chriſt hath ſeveral ways of communicating his love to his people (and that alſo even under deſertions and withdrawings) and there are ſeveral degrees of theſe, yet the leaſt of them is wonderful, and ſhould be welcomed by believers, if it were to ſee him but through the lattices.

Verse 10. *My Beloved ſpake, and ſaid unto me, Riſe up, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

Verse 11. *For lo, the winter is paſt, the rain is over, and gone.*

Verse

Verse 12. *The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.*

Verse 13. *The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vine with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*

Having put by her observation of his carriage, she comes to speak to the second part, namely what was her carriage; and it was to read over, or think over with her self, or to tell over to others, what Christ had said unto her: This is a main piece of spiritual wisdom, to fill Christ's room, in his absence, with his word and call, and to read his mind only from these, the best interpreters of it. These words, prefaced to Christ's epistle or sermon, *My Beloved spake, and said unto me*, are not idly set down, before she tell what the words which he spake were: But, 1. It shews the delights in repeating his Name; for she had made mention of it before, *verse 8*. 2. It shews what commended Christ's epistle or words to her; it was not only the matter therein contained (though that was warm and sweet) but *it is come* (saith she) *from my Beloved, it was he that said this, it was he that sent me this word*. 3. It shews her discerning of his voice; and her assurance, that the word, call, and promise, she was refreshing her self with, was his word, and no devised fable. It is a notable ground of consolation in Christ's absence to believers, when they are clear, that such and such gracious words come out of Christ's own mouth to them. 4. It says, that fellowship with Christ is no dumb exercise; these that are admitted to fellowship with him, he will be speaking with them, otherwise than with the world. And, 5. That a believer hath an ear to hear, not only what the minister saith, but also what Christ saith. 6. It is the word, as from Christ's own mouth, that hath an effectual impression; and a believer will receive it as such, that it may leave such an impression upon his heart. 7. When Christ quickens a word, it will be sweet; and such a word will be retained, so that these who have been quickened by it, will be able long afterward to repeat it: it is our getting little good of the word of the Lord, that makes us retain it so ill. 8. It affords much satisfaction to a believer, when he can say, *Christ said this, or that to me*, and that it is no delusion. 9. What Christ says unto the spirits of his own, in communion with them, it may bide the light, and is, on the matter, that same which he says in the word and gospel, as we will see in the following discourse, which, for this end, and for the edification of others, and honour of the Beloved, she tells over.

We may take these words or epistles of Christ's, as directed to three sorts, (as the

the duty here pressed, *rise and come away*, will bear ) 1. To these that are dead in sins, whom Christ by his voice quickens, and makes to rise, *Ja. 5. 28*. Altho' this be not the immediate intent of it, as it is spoken to a believer; yet, considering the scope of recording this, and the matter contained in it, it may well be thought useful to ingage these who are yet strangers to Christ, there being still but the same way of making at the first, and afterward recovering nearness with him, to wit, by faith in him; and so it will press receiving of, and closing with Christ. 2. We may consider it as spoken to believers, but to such as sleep, or are sitten up; so it presseth quickning. And 3. As spoken to believers in a disconsolate, discouraged condition; so its scope is to stir, quicken, rouse and comfort Christ's Bride, in any of these two last cases, that he may bring her in to more nearness of fellowship with himself, and to more boldness in the use-making of him; which is the great scope he aims at.

There are three parts of this sermon or epistle; 1. There is a kindly invitation, that mainly respects the pressing of faith, from *verse 10. to 14.* 2. There is a loving direction or two, *verse 14.* looking especially to the practice of duties. 3. Left any thing should be wanting, he gives a direction concerning the troublers of her peace, *verse 15.*

In all these parts, there are four things common to be found in each of them, 1. Some sadness in her condition supposed. 2. Some directions given to cure it. 3. Some motives used, to press the practice of these directions. 4. Some repetitions, to shew his seriousness in all, and the concernment of the thing spoken.

The case wherein these, who are here spoken to, are supposed to be, in this first part of Christ's sermon, *verse 10. &c.* is, 1. Deadness, total or partial: Believers may be under a decay, and be in part dead. 2. It is supposed that they are secure, and not vigorous; but insensible in a great part of that ill. 3. That they are disconsolate and heartless under distance and deadness; which ills often try together.

The direction he gives, in order to the helping of this, is in two words, 1. *Rise.* 2. *Come away.* Which says, that as she was now in a case of strangeness to Christ, so there was a necessity of rousing her self, and coming out of it; such a necessity as there is for a straying wife to return to her husband. Now, these words are a sweet call of a kind Husband, inviting to this return, and shewing the remedy of straying and estrangement from him. *Rising* imports, 1. One that is settled, some way, in a condition opposite to walking and running. 2. A stirring up of themselves, as unsatisfied therewith, and desirous to be out of it, with some endeavours to be up again. Declining from Christ puts souls still down, and holds them at under. *Come away*, holds forth a term

term from which she is to come, from that condition she was in ; whatever it was, it was not good : Men are in no desirable condition when Christ calls them. 2. A term to which she is to come, and that is Christ ; it is to follow the Bridegroom ; to get her brought to a nearer union and communion with him, is the great thing he aims at. 3. An act, whereby she passeth from that she was, and turning her back on that, moves towards him, that she may thereby attain nearer union and fellowship with him. By both which, we conceive, the exercise of faith in him, is mainly holden forth, 1. Because faith is ordinarily in scripture set forth by coming, *Isa. 55. 1. Jo. 5. 40. Jo. 6. 35.* and this expression suits well the act of faith. 2. Because it is the only mean of making up the distance betwixt him and us: Decay in the exercise of faith, and distance with Christ, go together ; and the exercise of faith, and nearness with him, are also inseparable companions. This is the meaning then, *Why lies thou in this discouraged, decayed and comfortless condition ? There is another, and a far better, to wit, a lively and comfortable condition allowed upon thee ; Christ calls thee to exercise faith in him, for recovering of thy case.* And this now is set down imperatively, by way of command, that we may know that believing in Christ, or keeping communion with him by faith, are not left to our option, but are laid on by a peremptory command, for necessitating us to the exercise of it, *1 Jo. 3. 23.* as a thing most acceptable to him, with which he cannot be angry, nor will he call obedience thereunto presumption.

3. When he hath given the invitation, he presseth it most seriously and weightily ; for tho' it be of our concernment, we are not easily induced even to believe : O but the world is much mistaken in this, that think it an easy matter to believe ! And also, he would have us knowing, he allows us the comfortable exercise of faith in him, with all his heart (if we may speak so) when he thus presseth and perswadeth us to it. Likewise, we may gather, that it is no common thing, which he exhorts unto, when he doth so seriously press it ; but it is of most weighty concernment to us.

There are three ways he maketh use of, to press it ; 1. By excellent, loving titles, *my love, and fair one* ; which are given here, especially to let her know he loved her, and thereby to encourage her to follow the call. The faith of his love hath no little influence upon our acting faith in particulars on him. 2. To shew that he is no rigid nor severe censurer of a discouraged believer ; no, *my fair one* (saith he) even when she hath many spots : Christ will raise no ill report on his own, whatever be their failings. 3. He presseth it from the special relation he hath to her, *my love, and my fair one* ; which makes all his words very kindly, and shews an obligation on her, by the covenant relation that stood between them, to be his, and to subject her self to his

his directions; according to that word, *Psal. 45. 10. Hearken, O daughter, &c. Forget thy father's house, &c.* And therefore she ought to leave all, and cleave to him: Christ requires nothing from us, but according to the covenant, that ties us to communion or cohabitation (to speak so) with Christ; and it is a most binding obligation; if this prevail not in pressing us to duty, that we are Christ's, nothing will prevail. It is no little practick in a believer, to be like the relation they stand in to Christ; what, my love (saith he) becomes it you to be so strange? *Rise and come, &c.* Some other thing is allowed to you than to others, and some other thing is called for from you, than is to be found in the way of others.

The third way he insisteth to urge this (for the call and kindness comes still on his side, even when we are in the fault) is by most pressing arguments of three sorts. The first is, *verse 11. Rise (saith he) and come away*; for there is no hazard now to travel this journey, because what might scar you is done away; the winter-cold and storm is past, and the rain, that makes rivers unpassable, and journeys dangerous and wearisome (therefore it is said, *Matth. 24. 20. Pray that your flight be not in the winter*) these are over. This supposes, 1. There was a sharp winter, and a bitter rain (as it were) whereby the way of fellowship with God was unpassable, till these were removed; the sword (as it were) standing to keep sinners from paradise, that is, the sentence and curse of the broken law, and the wrath of God pursuing therefore, which was indeed a fearful winter and storm, that made the sun dark, and the day gloomy; therefore is God's wrath in scripture compared to *terrible blasts and tempests*, and *who can stand before his cold?* *Psal. 147. 17.* 2. It says, that now these are done away by Christ; and, by his call in the Gospel, he assures his people, they shall find them fully removed: so that there is no wrath nor curse, that any, who yields to it, needs to fear. 3. It implies, that the Gospel brings good news; and there is none better than this, that God's justice is satisfied, and his wrath removed. 4. It imports, that Christ can bear sure testimony to this, that wrath is over, because he paid a price to remove it; and therefore sinners may take his word, and follow his call. And, 5. That believers are sometimes ready to suspect, more than they have ground, that there is some storm yet before them; but Christ hath made all fair-weather, ere he call. O great argument! He calls not to fight, but to gather the spoil; he puts not believers to the sea, till he himself hath made all calm: Believers meet with blasts and storms sometimes, but readily that is, when their back is on Christ, and not when their faces are to him-ward: The wind of wrath is not in a sinner's face that seeketh Jesus; but the word saith to such, *Fear not, Mark 16. 6. ye seek him.*

Secondly, He presseth her to rise and come, from some heartsome encouragement

ment he propones, *verse 12.* There is a great change (saith he) now, when the angry winter is over, all things are pleasant and lovely. 1. The *flowers appear*; that shews there is heat and warmth in the earth, and it is an effect of the spring, and a proof that winter is past. Hereby the fruits of grace, appearing in the change that is wrought upon sinners, may be signified, as is frequently hinted in this Song, where the Church is called a *garden*, and believers are the *flowers*: Come (saith he) grace hath made others to come through the ground, who once were like flowers in the winter under ground, but now they appear and flourish. 2. *The time of singing of birds is come.* As in the spring, birds sing, which in the winter drooped; So (saith he) now many poor sinners have changed their sad note, and begin to sing, who once were sinking under fears: and the good news of the Gospel, like the *voice of the turtle, is heard in our land*; these good tidings have been sent even to us, which is no little evidence of love, and no small confirmation to faith. That the news of the Gospel, and the consolation of sinners thereby, is here understood, is very agreeable to the scope; and these prove the removing of wrath, and are encouraging for stirring sinners up to the exercise of faith. And O how heartsome and refreshful is the spiritual spring, when the *day-spring from on high visits us*! (as these things, mentioned in the text, are in the natural spring very pleasant, and tend to provoke men to go and recreate themselves in the fields.) And this is the particular scope of this place: There is never a sinner hath gotten good of Christ, but it proves him to be very kind; and the blessed change Christ hath wrought on them, should encourage others to believe, especially when it is the day of their visitation, and the Sun of Righteousness hath become warm by the Gospel unto them, or unto the place and society in which they live. 3. He preseth his direction and call, by the very presentness, and *now* of the season of grace, *verse 13.* The *fig-tree putteth forth, &c.* Which shews not only that summer is near, but that *it is even at the door*, Matth. 24. 32, 33. and (saith he) *the vines bud and give a smell*; whereby is holden forth the thriving of the plants of God's vineyard, under the dispensation of grace, as we may see, *verse 15.* All these prove, that *now* is the acceptable time, and *now* is the day of salvation; and there are large allowances of consolation to them, that *now* will accept of Christ's offers, and subject to his call: Therefore, saith he, even to us, Sit not the time when all is ready, but up, and come away. And that the *voice of the turtle is heard in our land*, (that is, even the Church wherein we live) proves it to be the season of grace also; for it is long since the time of the *turtles singing* hath come to us, and their voice is yet still heard: And this says, the chock and season of grace is amongst our hands, now when Christ's call comes to our door; and therefore it would not be neglected.

And so he doth, in the *fourth* place, repete the call in the end of *verse 13. Arise, my love, &c.* And this repetition is to shew, 1. His willingness to have it effectual; if sinners were as willing, it would soon be a bargain. 2. Our sluggishness in not answering at once; therefore must word be upon word, call upon call, line upon line, precept upon precept. 3. To bear out the riches of his grace and love in this call, wherein nothing is wanting that can be alledged to perswade a sinner to close with Christ, and to press one that hath closed with him to be cheerful in him: What a heartsome life might sinners have with Christ, if they would embrace him, and dwell with him in the exercise of faith! they should have alway a spring-time, and possess (to say so) the sunny-side of the brae of all the world beside, walking in gardens and orchards, where the trees of the promises are ever fruitful, pleasant and savoury to sight, smell, taste; and every word of Christ, as the singing of birds, heartsome and delightful to the ear; and all of them healthful to the believer. Who will have a heart to fit Christ's call? or if they do, who will be able to answer it, when he shall reckon with them? It will leave all the hearers of the Gospel utterly inexcusable. *Lastly*, This Repetition shews the importunatness and the peremptoriness of his call: he will have no refusal, neither will he leave it arbitrary, if we will come, when we shall come, or what way; but he straitly enjoineeth it, and that just *now*: It is always time to believe, when ever Christ calls; and it is never time to shift, when he perswades. All this says, Christ must be a kind and loving Husband; how greatly play they the fool, that reject him! and how happy are they, who are effectually called to the marriage of the Lamb!

Verse 14. *O my dove! that art in the clefts of the rocks, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.*

This 14. *verse* contains the second part of Christ's sweet and comfortable sermon; wherein, beside the title which he gives his Bride, there are three things, 1. Her case. 2. The direction which he propones, as the cure of her case. 3. The motive pressing it.

The title is, *my dove*: This hath a sweet insinuation and motive in it. Believers are stiled so, (1.) For their innocent nature, *Matth. 10. 16.* (2.) For their tenderness, and trembling at the word of the Lord, *Hos. 11. 11. Isa. 38. 14. Hezekiah mourned as a dove.* (3.) For their beauty and purity, *Psal. 68. 13.* (4.) For their chaste adhering to their own mate; in which respect, that of *Isa. 38. 14.* is thought to allude to the mourning of the one, after the other's death: This shews what a believer should be, and who deserves this name.

The

The condition of this dove is, that she is *in the clefts of the rocks, and in the secret places of the stairs*: It is ordinary for doves to hide themselves in rocks, or holes in walls of houses; and this similitude is used sometimes in a good sense, as *Isa. 60. 8.* sometimes in an ill sense, as pointing out infirmity, and too much fear and filliness, *Hos. 7. 11.* *Ephraim is a silly dove without heart, that goes to Egypt, &c.* The Bride is here compared to a dove hiding itself, in the last sense, out of unbelief and anxiety, taking her to poor shifts for ease, and slighting Christ; as frightened doves, that mistake their own windows, and fly to other hiding-places; the scope being to comfort and encourage her, and the directions calling her to holy boldness, and prayer to him (implying that these had been neglected formerly) doth confirm this: Then says the Lord, My poor *heartless dove*, why art thou discouraged, taking thee to holes (as it were) to hide thee, fostering misbelief and fainting? that is not the right way.

What then should she do (might it be said) seeing she is so unmeet to converse with him, or look out to the view of any that looks on? He gives two directions, holding forth what was more proper, and fit for her case; 1. *Let me see thy countenance*, saith he: like one that is ashamed, thou hides thy self, as if thou durst not appear before me; but come (saith he) let me see thy countenance. This expression imports friendliness, familiarity, and boldness in her coming before him; so this phrase of *seeing one's face* is taken, *Gen. 43. 3, 5.* and *2 Sam. 14. 32.* as the not shewing of the countenance supposeth discontent or fear: so then, the Lord calls by this to holy familiarity with him, and confidence in it, in opposition to her former fainting and misbelief. The second direction is, *Let me hear thy voice*: To make him hear the voice, is to pray, *Psal. 5. 3.* and under it generally all the duties of religion are often comprehended: It is like, discouragement scarred the heartless Bride from prayer, and she durst not come before him; Do not so (saith he) but call confidently upon me in the day of trouble, and time of need. Observe, 1. Prayer never angers Christ (be the believer's case what it will) but forbearing of it will. 2. Discouragement, when it seizes on the child of God, is not soon shaken off; and therefore he not only gives one direction upon another, but also adds encouragements and motives suitable to these directions.

And so we come to the *third* thing in the verse, the motives he makes use of to press his directions, which are two, 1. *Sweet is thy voice.* 2. *Thy countenance is comely.* What is my voice and countenance? might she say (for proud unbelief is exceeding humble, and subtil, when it is opposing and thwarting with Christ's call) Yea, saith he, thy voice is sweet; there is no musick in the world so pleasant to me, as the prayer of a poor believer. Now, this doth not so much commend our prayers, as it shews his acceptance of them, and the excellency of his golden censer, that makes them with his odours

odours so savoury before God, *Rev. 8. 3.* And, 2. (saith he) *thy countenance*, tho' there be spots on it, yet to me it is *comely*; therefore let me *hear thy voice*, let me *see thy countenance*. Christ had rather converse with a poor believer, than with the most gallant, stately person in all the world beside. Observe, 1. Fainting may overmaster even a poor believer, and misbelief may mire them. 2. There are often foolish feckless shifts made use of by believers, for defending misbelief and discouragement, when they are under temptation. 3. Faithless fears and discouragement may come to that height, as to scarr a believer from Christ's company, and marr them in prayer to him. 4. Misbelief bears out still this to a tempted soul, that Christ cares not for it; yea, that he disdains such a person and their company. 5. Christ is tender of fainting believers, and of their consolation, even when they suspect him most, and when their suspicions are most unreasonable and uncharitable to him, *Isa. 49. 14, 15.* 6. Christ allows poor believers a familiar and confident walk with him; they might all be courtiers, for the access that is allowed them, if they did not refuse their allowance, and sinfully obstruct their own access thereto. 7. Christ loves to be much employed by his people; and there is nothing more pleasing to him, than frequently to *hear their voice*. 8. He is a sweet and gentle constructor of them, and their service; and is not rigid, even when often they have many misconstructions of him. 9. The more discouragement seizeth upon the soul, there should be the more prayer, and thronging in upon Christ; for there is no outgate to be expected, but in that way. 10. None needs to fear to put Christ on their secrets; or, they need not so to fear (if they be sincere) that they spill their prayers, as thereby to be kept from prayer, or made heartless in it; for it is Christ that hears them, whose censer, *Rev. 8. 6.* makes them savoury before God: *Let me hear thy voice*, is no little encouragement in that duty; and the right consideration of it would help to much boldness in prayer, and especially considering, that the God who is the hearer of prayer, is *our Beloved*.

Verse 15. *Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.*

This 15 *verse* contains the last part of Christ's sermon; wherein, as he had formerly given directions in reference to her particular walk, so here he evidenceth his care of her external peace: That Christ speaks these words, the continuation and series of them with the former, the scope (which is to make full proof of his care) and the manner how the duty here mentioned is laid on, to wit, by way of authority, makes it clear. There are three things in them, 1. An external evil incident to the Church, and that is, to be spoiled by

by foxes. 2. A cure given in a direction, *Take them, &c.* 3. He gives reasons to deter all from cruel pity in sparing of them. *For, &c.*

In clearing the case here supposed, as incident to the Church, we are to consider, 1. What these *vines* are. 2. What be these *foxes*. 3. How they spoil the vines. For clearing the *First*, Consider, that the visible Church is often compared in scripture to a vineyard, *Matth. 21. 33.* And the particular professors, especially believers, are as the vine-trees that grow in it; so, *Isa. 5. 7.* *The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel, collectively, and the men of Judah are his pleasant plants.* They are called so, 1<sup>st</sup>, For their feckleness in themselves, *Ezek. 15. 2, 3, &c.* yet, excelling in fruit beyond others. 2. Because of God's separating them from others, and taking pains on them above all others, *Isa. 27. 2, 3.* For these, and other reasons, they are called the *vines*. Next, By *foxes* are understood false teachers, *Ezek. 13. 4.* *O Israel, thy prophets (that is, thy flattering teachers, as the context clears) are as foxes in the deserts.* And, *Matth. 7. 15.* they are called *wolves in sheeps clothing*: Hereby are meant not every one, who in something differ in their own judgment from the received rule, if they vent it not for corrupting of others, or the disturbing of the Church's peace; but these who are, in respect of others, seducers, teaching men to do as they do, in that which tends to the Church's hurt: and such also, as, by flattery and unfaithfulness, destroy souls, proportionally come in to share of the name, as they do of the thing signified thereby; as that place of *Ezekiel*, before cited, and *chap. 34. 2, 3.* doth confirm. Now, they get this name for their resembling foxes in three things; (1.) In their abominable nature; wherefore they are called *foxes, wolves, dogs, &c.* and such like, which are abhorred and hated of all men; and so are these most hateful to God, and so ought they to be with all others. (2.) For their destroying, hurtful nature, in their destroying the Church; therefore called *ravening wolves*, *Matth. 7. 15.* and *grievous wolves*, *Acts 20. 29.* who *subvert whole houses*, *Tit. 1. 11.* and *whose word eateth as doth a gangrene*, *2 Tim. 2. 17.* (3.) They are compared to these for their subtilty, a fox being famous for that; for which cause *Herod* is called a fox, *Luke 13. 32.* So *false teachers speak lies in hypocrisy*, *1 Tim. 4. 2.* *creep into houses, their doctrines eat as a canker insensibly*: And they are, *2 Cor. 11. 13, 14.* called *deceitful workers*; and as their master Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, so do they themselves into the ministers of Christ: All such beasts, whatever their shape be, are hateful to Christ and his Church. Thirdly, These false teachers, or foxes, are said to *spoil the vines*; for foxes hurt not a vineyard or flock of lambs more than false teachers do the Church. 1. Corrupting the purity of doctrine. 2. Obscuring the simplicity of worship. 3. Overturning the beauty of order, and bringing in confusion.

sion. 4. Spoiling her bond of unity, and renting the affections, and dividing the ways of her members, thereby dissipating the flock. 5. Extinguishing the vigour and life of Christian practice; diverting from what is more necessary, to hurtful and vain janglings, which do still increase to more ungodliness, and have never profited them who were occupied therein, *Heb. 13. 7.* 6. By ruining souls, carrying them head-long to the pit, *2 Pet. 2. 1.* and *3. 16.* There is no hurt nor hazard the Church of Christ meets with, or ever met with, more grievous and dangerous than what she meets with from such, altho' this be an exercise and trial ordinarily incident to her.

*Secondly,* The cure the Lord provides, is, the furnishing of his Church with discipline, and the giving of directions for managing of it, in these words, *Take us,* &c. Wherein consider these four, (1.) To whom it is directed. (2.) What is required. (3.) A motive insinuate in the expression, *Take us.* (4.) The extent of the direction, for the obviating of a question. It may be supposed to be directed to one of four. 1<sup>st</sup>, Either to the Bride; or, 2<sup>dly</sup>, To Angels; or, 3<sup>dly</sup>, To Magistrates; or, 4<sup>thly</sup>, To Church-guides. Now, it is to none of the first three; therefore it must be to the last and fourth. *First,* It is not to the Bride: For, 1. The word *take*, in the Original, is in the plural number, and signifieth *take ye*; now, the Lord useth not to speak to the Church, but as to one. 2. He says, *Take us*; and so taking the Bride in with himself, as a party for whom this service is to be performed, the speech must be directed to some third. *Secondly,* It is not directed to Angels, these are not spoken to in all this Song; and this being a duty to be performed while the Church is militant, they come not in to gather the tares from the wheat, till the end of the world, nor to separate the bad fish from the good, till the net be fairly on the shore. *Thirdly,* This direction cannot be given to the Magistrate; for, beside that he is not mentioned in this Song, nor, as such, hath he any part in the ministry of the Gospel, or capable to be thus spoken unto (altho' the duty from the force of its argument will also reach him in his station, because he should so far as he can prevent the spoiling of Christ's vineyard in his place) Beside this, I say, this direction must take place in all times, whenever the Church hath such a trial to wrestle with; otherwise it were not suitable to Christ's scope, nor commensurable with her need. Now, for many hundreds of years the Church wanted magistrates, to put this direction in practice; yet wanted she not foxes, nor was she without a suitable capacity of guarding her self against them, by that power wherewith Christ hath furnished her. It remains therefore, *Fourthly,* That it must be spoken to Christ's Ministers, and officers in the Church, called *rulers* in the scripture, and, in this Song, *watchmen* and *keepers of this vineyard*, as by office contradistinguished from professors, *chap. 3. 3.* and *5. 7.* and *8. 11, 12.* Such the

P

Church

Church never wanted, such are required to *watch* (*Acts* 20. 24.) *against wolves*, and such in the Church of *Ephesus* are commended (*Rev.* 2. 3, 4.) for putting this direction in execution. 2dly, The duty here required is to *take them*, as men use to hunt foxes till they be taken; and this implies all that is needful for preventing their hurting of Christ's vines: Christ's ministers are to lay out themselves in discovering, confuting and convincing, censuring and *rejecting* them, *Tit.* 3. 11. that is, not to *endure them that are evil*, but to try them judicially, as it is *Rev.* 2. 2.

*Obs.* 1. Christ's Church is furnished with sufficient authority in her self, for her own edification, and for censuring of such as would obstruct the same. 2. This Church-authority is not given to professors in common, or to the Bride as the first subject; but to their guides, Christ's ministers and servants. 3. It is no less a duty, nor is it less necessary to put forth this power against false teachers, than against other gross offenders: So did *Paul*, *2 Tim.* 1. ult. and so commands he others to do, *Tit.* 3. 10. heresy and corrupt doctrine being also a fruit of the flesh, *Gal.* 5. 20. as well as other scandalous sins.

*Thirdly*, There is a motive to press, implied, while he saith this, *Take us*: Which words insinuate, that it is service both to him and her, and that ministers are his servants, and the Church's for Christ's sake. It shews also his sympathy, in putting himself, as it were, in hazard with her (at least mystically considered) and his love in comforting her, that he thinks himself concerned in the restraint of these foxes, as well as she is.

*Fourthly*, The direction is amplified, to remove an objection, (say some) All heresies, or all hereticks are not equal; some comparatively are little to be regarded, and it is cruelty to meddle with these, that seem to profess fair. No (saith he) *take them all, even the little foxes*; for, *tho' they be but little, yet they are foxes, tho' they be not of the grossest kind* (as all scandals in facts are not alike, yet none is to be dispensed with) *so they are* (saith he) *foxes, and corrupt others*; for, *a little leaven will leaven the whole lump* (often small-like schisms, or heresies, such as the *Novatians* and *Donatists*, &c. have been exceedingly defacing to the beauty of the Church) *therefore, saith he, hunt and take them all*. How small a friend is our Lord to toleration! and how displeased is he with many errors, that the world thinks little of! Magistrates, ministers and people may learn here, what distance ought to be kept with the spreaders of the least errors; and how every one ought to concur, in their stations, for preventing the hurt that comes by them.

The last thing in the verse, is, the reasons wherewith this direction is backed and pressed. The *first* is, All of them *spoil the vines*: Error never runs loose, and hereticks never get liberty, but the spoiling of the vines one way or other follows; and can beasts be suffered in a garden, or orchard, and the plants not be hurt?

2dly, If

2dly, If any say, they are but little foxes, and unable to hurt : He answers this, and adds a second reason, in saying, *The grapes are tender ; or, The vines are in the first grapes :* that is, as they (while scarce budding or sprouting) are easily blasted by a small wind, so the work of grace in a believer, or Christ's ordinances in his Church, are most precious and tender wares, and cannot abide rough hands ; even the least of seducers, or corrupt teachers, may easily wrong them : they are of such a nature, as they may be soon spoiled, if they be not tenderly and carefully looked to. *Obs.* 1. They that have grace would be tender of it ; it may easily be hurt. 2. Gracious persons would not think themselves without the reach of hazard from corrupt teachers ; for this is spoken of the Bride, *The foxes spoil the vines.* 3. Our Lord Jesus is exceeding tender of the work of grace, in, and amongst his people ; and where it is weakest, he is some way most tender of it. 4. This argument, here made use of, says also, that these who are most tender of his Church, and the graces of his people, will be most zealous against false teachers, even the least of them : For these two are joined together in him, and are in themselves necessary to preserve the one, and restrain the other ; and the suffering these to ramble and run without a check, cannot be the way of building, but of spoiling Christ's Church.

The *third* motive, or reason pressing the watchmen to have a care of the vines, is hinted in the possessive particle *our ; For our vines,* &c. which is relative to the watchmen, whom he takes in with himself, as having a common interest in the Church : The Church is his, and theirs, as the flock is the owner's, and the shepherds, who are particularly set to have the oversight of it ; for, the shepherd may say, This is my flock, which no other servant can say : And this is a great piece of dignity put upon ministers, to be *fellow-workers with Christ*, 2 Cor. 6. 1. &c. and binds on their duty strongly ; for, saith Christ here to them, *Ye will have loss also, if ye see not to it, because ye must count for the vineyard, wherewith you are intrusted : It is yours, and yet ye are not absolute lords, for it is also mine, I am the owner of it.* And so the vines are both theirs and Christ's : their interest speaks how naturally they should care for them ; his interest shews the dependency both ministers and people ought to have on him.

Verse 16. *My Beloved is mine, and I am his : he feedeth among the lilies.*

Verse 17. *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away : turn,*

*my Beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.*

Now follows the two last parts of her carriage in the Beloved's absence : First, after she hath (as it were) read over his epistle, she comforts her self in his love, and her interest in him, tho' he be absent. (It is a good use of his word, when it is made use of, for strengthening our faith in him, when sense is away) There are two parts of this consolation, 1. Her faith is clear for the present, *verse 16.* 2. Her hope is solid in the expectation of an excellent day coming, *verse 17.* Next, *verse 17.* she puts up a prayer for a gracious visit, which she knows he will allow upon her until that day come ; and this is the last thing here recorded of the Bride's carriage in the Bridegroom's absence.

In the 16. verse, the faith of her interest in him is, 1. Asserted ; *My Beloved is mine, and I am his.* 2. It is vindicated, or established against an objection, in the following words, *he feeds, &c.* The assertion holds out an union betwixt him and her, *I am his, &c.* or, as it is in the Original, *I am to him, and he is to me :* such as is the union betwixt married persons, *Hos. 3. 3.* which the ty of marriage brings on, even such is this which follows covenanting with God ; for this union presupposeth it, and is founded on it, *Ezek. 16. 8. I made a covenant with thee, and thou becomest mine, or, to me :* Altho' (faith she) he be not here, yet he is my husband, and that ty stands betwixt me and him, which is no little privilege ; and in this she comforts her self under absence.

*Observe, First,* There is an excellent union, and peculiar ty betwixt Christ and believers, which none other can lay claim to but they : It is excellent, as will appear, if we consider these properties of it ; 1. It is a near union, they are *one flesh*, *Eph. 5. 27.* as man and wife ; they are *flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone.* 2. It is a real, and not an imaginary union (tho' it be spiritual and by faith) it makes and transfers a mutual right of the one to the other, and hath real effects. 3. It is mutual on both sides. Christ is wholly hers, and she is wholly dedicated to him. 4. It is a kindly union, such as is betwixt husband and wife, and followed with the fruits of a most sweet relation. 5. It is an union which is some way full ; whole Christ is hers, and she by consent and title is wholly his. 6. It is an indissolvable union ; there is no dissolving of it by any thing that can fall out, otherwise the consolation were not solid. Again, *Observe, 2dly,* That this relation, which the believer hath to Christ, is the great ground of his happiness and consolation, and not any sensible presence, or any dispensation, or gift communicate by Christ to him. *3dly,* That believers may attain assurance and clearness, anent their

in-

interest in him, and may come to know really that Christ is theirs : and believers should aim to be through in this, that their *calling and election may be made sure* to themselves, 2 Pet 1. 10. 4<sup>thly</sup>, Believers, when they have attained clearness, should acknowledge it, and comfort themselves in it, and not raise new disputes about it. 5<sup>thly</sup>, This clearness may consist with absence, and want of sensible presence ; and there is no case wherein a believer should stick faster to his confidence, than in such a case, when under desertion and absence, as the spouse doth here.

2. She vindicates her faith in these words, *He feedeth among the lilies*. The words may be looked upon as the preventing of an objection; for it might be said, *If Christ be yours, where is he ? Is it likely that he is yours, when he is so far away ?* For, the faith of clearness will be assaulted and set upon, and it is not easily maintained ; and unbelief takes the advantage of Christ's absence from sense, to brangle it ; so that unbelief and temptation especially sets on then : Therefore, she answers it thus, *He feedeth among the lilies*, that is, he is kind to his people, and present with them, tho' now I see him not. Faith may, and will argue from Christ's love to his people in general, and from the promises that speaks to all, when there seems to be nothing singular in the believer's own condition, from which it can take comfort. By *lilies* are understood all believers : the Church was called a lillie, *verse 2*. here all believers are so called, as partaking of that same beauty and savour, and because planted in the same true garden. Christ was called a lillie, *verse 1*. and here all believers are called lilies, shewing, 1. That all believers have a conformity to Christ, and partake of the divine nature and spirit that is in him. 2. That all believers, in things that are essential to grace and holiness, have conformity one to another ; they have the same Faith, Spirit, Covenant, Husband, &c. altho' in circumstantial and degrees there be differences. Next, His *feeding* amongst them shews, 1. A special gracious presence in his Church, and among believers ; there he *walketh among the seven golden candlesticks*, Rev. 2. 1. 2. A special delight he hath in them, and satisfaction to be amongst them, as a man delighteth to walk in his garden : It is *his meat* (John 4. 32, 34.) and *drink* to do them good ; so then (saith she) he is kind to all his people, and is so to me, tho' for the time I see him not : And thus also she answers the question, *chap. 6. 1, 2*. even when Christ is a-seeking, and she was inquiring after him. *Obs.* 1. Christ's care of his Church, and love to his Bride, is no less under absence, than when his presence is sensibly enjoyed. 2. The consideration of this, tends much to further the consolation of believers ; and it becomes them well to believe this, when under desertion and absence, and so to ward off temptations.

The solid exercise of faith never wants hope waiting on it ; therefore, 2dly, *Verse 17.* that follows, for compleating the Bride's consolation, in these words, *until the day break, and shadows, &c.* *Tho' there be shadows* (saith she) *and veils betwixt him and me, in this night of desertion ; yet, there is a day coming, when these, by his presence, shall be made to flee away, and I shall see him as he is.* There is a twofold day spoken of in scripture, 1. A day of Christ's presence here upon earth, *Luke. 1. 78.* *The day-spring from on high hath visited us.* 2. The day of his glorious appearing, commonly called the great day ; and in a singular way called here *the day*, because it hath no night of interruption following thereupon, and because it goes as far beyond what believers possess now, as day exceeds the night ; therefore it is called *the morning*, *Psal. 49. 14.* in which the just shall have the dominion ; and the dawning of the day, and the *rising of the day-star in our hearts*, 2 *Pet. 1. 19.* which is there opposed to the clearest prophecies and ordinances, which are but as a candle in a dark place, in respect of that day. Now, we conceive the last and great day is signified here, 1. Because that is her scope, to comfort her self in the hope of what is coming. 2. Because she opposeth it to the present means, as to shadows, even to faith it self, for that she enjoyed for the time ; and also to sensible presence, which in the next words she prays for, till that day dawn. By *shadows* is meant, whatever marrs the immediate, full and satisfying enjoying of Christ, which, as shadows, hide him from us, or darken him, that we do not see him as he is, or give but small and dark representations of him, (like shadows of the body) which are very unproportioned unto his own excellent worth. They are said to *flee away*, because a glimpse of Christ then, when he, who is the Sun of Righteousness, shall shine at the break of that day, shall dispel and dissipate them more fully and quickly, than this natural sun, when rising, doth scatter darkness and shadows that go before it. And by *until*, we understand the setting of a fixed term, which distinguisheth one time from another, as *Gen. 32.* *I will not let thee go until thou bless me ;* so saith she, *Until that day of immediate presence come, let me have love-visits*, as is expressed in the following words. *Obs. (1.)* There is an excellent day coming to believers, wherein Christ shall be immediately enjoyed and seen, and wherein the soul shall be comforted with no mediate object, or created excellency, but shall see his face, and be filled with the fulness of God. *(2.)* While here, there are many shadows even betwixt Christ and the strongest believers ; *we see but darkly as in a glass*, 1 *Cor. 13. 12.* There is, 1. A shadow of desertion, and his hiding of himself. 2. A shadow of ordinances, where he is seen, but yet darkly, like a face in a looking-glass. 3. A shadow of sinful infirmities, drawing veils betwixt Christ and us, and hiding his face from us, *Isa. 59. 2.* 4. A shadow of natural infirmity ; for, not only are we ready through unbelief to slander him, but by reason of

of weakness (like narrow or old bottles) we are not capable of him, and unable to contain him. (3.) At that day of his appearing, all these shadows will instantly be done away: there will not one tear be left on any believer's cheeks, there will be no affliction or desertion to hide him from them, but *they shall be for ever with him*: there will then be *no ordinances, nor temple*, Rev. 21. 22. *but the Lord God, and the Lamb himself, shall be the temple* and light of his people. Nor will there be any sinful infirmities then to interpose betwixt him and them; death, the curse and corruption, will be cast into the lake: No unclean thing accompanies the believer into the new Jerusalem; nay, no imperfect thing is there; for, whatever is imperfect, and whatever was *in part*, is then done away, 1 Cor. 13. 10. and what is perfect will then come; the soul in its faculties will then be perfected, capacitated and dilated, to conceive, take up and delight in God; and the body perfected, made glorious and spiritual, like the glorious body of our Lord Jesus, Phil. 3. ult. (4.) The hope of that day, and of the flying away of all shadows then, is (and no marvel it be) very refreshing to the Lord's people: and believers, in all their darkneses, should comfort themselves and others, from the hope of it, 1 Thes. 4. ult. (5.) All that are Christ's, or whoever have faith in Christ, and fellowship with him by virtue of his covenant, may expect at that day to enjoy Christ immediately and fully, and to see him as he is. O that men believed this! and that many were thronging in to his covenant now, as they would not desire to be cast from his presence in that day! Yet, (6.) All shadows are never removed till then; the believer must, and some way will submit to Christ's way of ordering it so, and not seek it should be otherways till then.

In the last place, the Bride falls about the exercise of prayer, in the rest of this verse: faith and hope in exercise always stir up to prayer; for, these graces do not foster laziness and security, but incite and provoke to duty (it is a good token when faith and hope are so accompanied) therefore she turns her to prayer, in which she speaks to him as to her Beloved. Clearness of interest, as it helps notably to many things, so to confidence in prayer especially. The petition (importing still absence) hath these two in it, (1.) The suit it self, *turn*. (2.) The enforcing and enlarging of it, *be like a roe*, &c. Turning her, implies, 1. Sense and feeling of his absence. 2. Her serious desire to have Christ again. 3. That his absence may be removed by his own returning; and so the change of her case to the better, must flow from him. And, 4. That she may ask this from him, and expect by prayer in faith to obtain it, believing prayer being the best mean to effectuate this. Next, she enforceth and enlargeth her petition, *Be thou like a roe*, &c. that is, *Seeing* (saith she) *all shadows will not be removed till that time, what is my suit for the time?*

*time? It is even this, That thou wilt give me visits of thy presence, and be like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of Bethel. The word Bethel signifies division; and so it may be made use of here: So long (saith she) as these mountains divide betwixt me and thee, Lord, be not a stranger, but swiftly, easily and kindly (as the roes come over mountains to their mates, Prov. 5. 19.) come thou to me, and comfort me with frequent love-visits, until that time come, that thou take me to thee, to enjoy thee fully and immediately. Observe 1. It is lawful for believers to desire sensible presence, even here-away: yea, it is suitable, they should often long and pray for it. 2. Where the hope of heaven is solid, sensible manifestations of Christ's love will be most ardently sought for: It will never prejudice one of their satisfaction and full payment, then, that they have gotten a large earnest-penny here; she knows that will never be reckoned up to her. 3. Much prayer, flowing from, and waiting upon the exercise of faith and hope, is a notable way to bring the soul to the enjoyment of sense. 4. The believer hath a heartsom life, and a rich inheritance, Christ here, and Christ hereafter; the lines are fallen unto him in pleasant places. 5. She grounds her suit on the marriage-relation and ty betwixt him and her, my Beloved (saith she) a covenant-claim to Christ, is the most solid ground, upon which believers can walk, in their approaches before him, and in their pleadings with him. 6. He allows believers to plead for his company, from this ground, that he is theirs by covenant, as he pleads for their company, on that same ground, verse 10. &c.*



## CHAP. III.

### BRIDE.

Verse 1. *By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth; I sought him, but I found him not.*

Verse 2. *I will rise now, and go about the city, in the streets, and in the broad-ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.*

**T**HIS chapter hath three parts, 1. The Bride's sad exercise under the want of Christ, and in seeking after him till she find him, to verse 6. 2. The daughters of Jerusalem come in, commending the Bride, verse 6. 3. The Bride, from verse 7. to the end, returns to discourse of, and commend the excellency and amiableness of Christ.

In

In her exercise consider, 1. Her case. 2. Her carriage in several steps. 3. Her success in every step. 4. Her practice when she hath obtained her desire: Or, we may take them all up in these two, (1.) Her sad condition, and her carriage under it. (2.) Her outgate and her carriage suitable thereto. Her case is implied in two words, in the beginning of *verse 1.* 1. It was *night* with her, 2. She was on *her bed*. By *night*, is ordinarily understood darkness and affliction, opposite to light of day and joy; and here her exercise being spiritual, it must imply some spiritual affliction, or soul-sad spiritual exercise. So *night* is taken, *Psal 42. 8. He will command his loving kindness in the day, and in the night* (while the day come, that his loving kindness be intimate) *his song shall be with me, &c.* The scope shews, that it is a night of desertion she is under, through the want of Christ's presence whom she loves: His presence, who is the Sun of Righteousness with healing under his wings, makes the believer's day; and his absence is their night, and makes them droop, as being under a sad night of soul-affliction; therefore is it, that she seeks so carefully after his presence. 2. Her being *on her bed*, is not taken here, as implying nearness with him, for the scope shews he is absent; but a laziness of frame on her spirit, opposite to activeness and diligence, as it is taken, *chap. 5. verse 3.* and so it is opposed to her after-rising and diligence; and therefore it is also called *my bed*, implying that she was here alone in a secure comfortless frame; and therefore, for this, it is distinguished from *our bed*, *chap. 1. 16.* and *his bed* afterward, *verse 7.* where she is allowed rest, and spiritual ease and solace in his company; but here, on *her bed*, she hath no such allowance, whatever carnal ease and rest she take to her self: Believers have their own fits of carnal security, when they give their corruptions rest, that is, *their own bed*; and it is a heartless lair (to speak so) to ly alone and want the Beloved: This is her case, wanting Christ, yet lying too still, as contented some way in that condition; tho' it cannot continue so with believers, it will turn heavy and perplexing at last to them, as it doth here to the Bride: and sure, the easiest time under security is not so comfortable and profitable to believers, as is an exercise that takes them more up; therefore afterward she prefers *rising and seeking*, to this woful *rest*. It shews, 1. That believers distance and darkness may grow: for, in the former chapter, Christ was absent, yet, as through a window or lattices, there were some glimpses of him; but here it is night, and there is not so much as a twilight discovery of him. 2. Often, distance with Christ, and security and deadness (as to our spiritual life) go together: When Christ is absent, believers then usually fall from activity in their duty, *Isa. 64. 7. No man stirreth up himself to lay hold on thee*; and the reason is, *thou hast hid thy face, &c. Matth. 25. 5. While the Bridegroom tarrieth, even the wise virgins slumbered and slept.*

Her carriage, or way that she takes in this case, is set out in four steps. The first is in these words, *I sought him whom my soul loveth*. Consider here, (1.) The title Christ gets, *him whom*, &c. Christ got this name before, and now several times she repeats it; and it holds forth, 1. The sincerity of her love, it was her soul and heart that loved him. 2. The degree and singularity of it: No other thing was admitted in her heart to compare with him; he bears the alone sway there, in respect of the affection she had to him; it is he, and none other, upon whom her soul's love is set, otherwise this title would not suitably design him: Christ loves well to have such titles given to him, as may import the heart's special esteem of him. 3. It shews, that, even in believers lowest conditions, there remains some secret soul-esteem of Christ; and that, in their judgment, he is still their choice and waill above all the world. Yet, 4. That their practice, while security prevails, is most unsuitable to their convictions and judgment. (2.) Consider her practice and carriage: while Christ is absent, her practice is not altogether a lying by, without the form of religion; for, saith she, *on my bed I sought him*, that is, I prayed and used some means, but in a lazy way, not stirring up my self vigorously in it. *Obs.* 1. Believers, in a secure frame, may keep some form of duty; yet their duties are like the frame of their heart, lifeless and hypocritical. 2. There is much of a believer's practice such as themselves will find fault with, when they come to look rightly upon it; yea, even much of their way, while they keep up the form of duty, is but like the sluggard, *Prov. 26. 14. turning themselves upon their beds, as the door doth upon the hinges*; not lying still, nor altogether daring to give over the form, yet little better on the matter, because they make no effectual progress, nor can they say their soul is in and with their service, which they perform. 3. Her success as to this step, is, *but I found him not*; that is, I was nothing the better, these sluggish endeavours did not my business. Every form of seeking will not obtain; and one may seek Christ long in their ordinary formal way, ere they find him; yet it is good not to give over, but to observe the form: Life and love is not altogether gone, when one discerns absence and their own laziness with discontent.

When this doth not reach her design, she proceeds to a more lively step, *verse 2.* and that is, to get up, and seek him in a more active stirring way: Which says, 1. She observed the continuance of her distance, and what came of her prayers and seeking; which is a good beginning of one's recovery, and winning to their feet after a fit of security and decay. 2. It says, it is often good for a believer, as to their rousing, and their recovering of spiritual life, that sense is not always easily obtained; this activity had not followed (readily) had not Christ constrained her to it, by cross-dispensations and disappointments. In this step we have, *First*, Her resolving to fall about a more active

active way in seeking him. *Secondly*, Her performance. *Thirdly*, Her success.

*First*, Her resolution is, *I will rise now* (saith she) *and go about the streets, &c.* In which there are these three, *1st*, What she resolves to do, not to give over (for that should never be given way to) but to bestir her self more actively in duty, *I will rise*, and go from the *bed* to the *streets of the city*, and seek him there. By *city* is understood the Church, whereof all members are fellow-citizens, Eph. 2. 19. It is called so, 1. For its order and government; so the Church is as a city, that hath watchmen and laws. 2. For its unity; it is one common-wealth and incorporation, Eph. 2. 12. This *Jerusalem* is a city compacted together, Psal. 122. 3. 3. For its privileges, whereof all believers (who are the burgessees and fellow-citizens) are partakers, Eph. 2. 19. and unto which all others, who are without, are strangers. Her *going into the city*, suppones a communicating of her case to others for help, and her using of more publick means, opposite to her private dealing within her self on her bed, *verse 1.* even as *rising* imports a stirring of her self to more activity in the manner of performing these duties, opposite to her seeking him formerly while she lay still on her bed: The thing then resolved upon is to this sense, *What am I doing? Are there not more means, in the use of which I may seek Christ? Is there not another way of inquiring after him, than this lazy formal way? I will up and essay it.* There are many means given for a believer's help; and when one fails, another may be blessed: and therefore, believers are still to follow from one to another; and where true love to Christ is, it will make them do so, and spare no pains till they meet with him. Again, *2dly*, Ere she gets to her feet, and goes to the streets, &c. she deliberately resolves it, *I will rise, &c.* Which shews, 1. That her former disappointment did put her to a consultation what to do, and made her more serious: And this is the use that ought to be made of disappointments in the duties of religion. 2. That there will be heart-deliberations in a Christian walk, when it is serious; and they are the best performances and duties, that are the results of these. 3. Serious resolutions are often very useful, and helpful in duty; for they are engagements, and spurs to stir up to duty, when we are indisposed for it. 4. It is good cordially to resolve upon duty, when the practice of it is somewhat difficult or obstructed; for this both speaks sincerity, and also helps to lessen the difficulty which is in the way of duty. 5. Resolutions to set about duty are often-times the greatest length believers can win at, while under indisposition; and this much is better than nothing, because it draws on more. *3dly*, This resolution is qualified, *I will rise now*, saith she; that is, *Seeing these sluggish endeavours doth not avail me, I will delay no longer, but will now presently fall about it in more earnest.* It is the sign of a sincere resolution, when it doth

not put off or shift duty, but engageth the soul in a present undertaking of it, *Psal.* 119. 59, 60.

*Next*, Her performance, or her putting this resolution in practice, doth accordingly follow instantly; *I sought him* (said she) that is, in the streets, &c. *Obs.* 1. It is not a resolution worth the mentioning, that hath not practice following; for every honest resolution is followed with practice, whatever short-coming wait upon it. 2. Honest resolutions are often to duty, like a needle that draws the thread after it; and believers would not fear to resolve on duty from fear of coming short in performance, if their resolutions be undertaken in the strength of Christ, as this was; as is clear by considering her former frame, which was such as would give no great encouragement to selfy undertakings in duties.

*Lastly*, Her success, or rather her disappointment, follows in these words, *but I found him not*; even then, when I was most serious in seeking him, I missed him still: which is not only spoken, to shew the event, but also by way of regrave, she is deeply affected with it. *Obs.* 1. When the Lord's people have been formerly lazy, Christ may keep up himself, even when they become more active, rather hereby chastising their former negligence, than being offended at their present diligence in duty. 2. It is sad when Christ is missed even in duty, and that once and again. 3. She continues to be a distinct observer of the fruits both of publick and private duties, which is a commendable practice, and to be made conscience of by all the seekers of his face.

*Verse 3.* *The watchmen that go about the city, found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?*

This verse contains the third step of the Bride's carriage, being now abroad; the watchmen found her, and she enquires for her Beloved at them: And her success in this may be gathered from what follows; she doth not upon recourse to them immediately find him, but is put to go a little further. In the words there is, 1. An opportunity or mean for finding Christ, met with. 2. Her improving of it. 3. The success which is implied, as is said.

The mean holds forth these three things, 1<sup>st</sup>, What the Church is; it is a city, wherein there is order, and a common-fellowship, as hath been said, *verse 2.* 2<sup>dly</sup>, The minister's office is here implied, this City hath watchmen; so are ministers called, *Ezek.* 3. 17. *Isa.* 62. 6. *Heb.* 13. 17. Which word imports, 1. That the Church is a city in danger, having outward and inward enemies, and therefore needing watchmen. 2. That there is an office of a ministry appointed in the Church for guarding against and preventing her danger; and that some are peculiarly designed, and separate from others for that pur-

purpose; some who may be called *watchmen*, which others cannot be said to be; and so they are here distinguished from believers or private persons. 3. This office is most necessary, burdensom, and of great concernment to the safety of the Church, as *watchmen* are to a city; for so watch they over the souls of the people committed to their trust.

*Again*, these watchmen are in the exercise of their duty; they *went about the city*: Which shews their diligence according to their trust; at least, it holds forth the end wherefore they are appointed. *Obs.* There is but one City or Church, and all ministers are watchmen of that one Church, given for the edification of that body; and they should watch, not only for this or that post (to say so) but for the safety of the whole, as watchmen that stand at their post, for the good of the whole city.

3dly, These *watchmen found her*, that is, as we conceive, by their doctrine they spoke to her condition, and by their searching and particular application, made the two-edged sword of the word reach her; as if they had discernably pointed her out, beyond all the rest of the congregation: Which shews, 1. The efficacy of the word when rightly managed, *Heb. 4. 12.* It is a *discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* 2. That God can make it find out one in the midst of many others, when the minister knows not; and can make it speak to a believer's case, or any other particular person's condition, as if he did know and aim at them particularly. 3. That ministers should be searching, and differencing in their doctrine, as the several conditions, and various exercises of hearers require; that is, they ought to put difference betwixt the precious and the vile, and rightly to divide the word of truth, or to lay every one's portion to them, so as it be not given in gross, or heaped together to all, but to every one their own allowance. In sum then, that which she says is this, *When I had gone abroad, saith she, in heaviness to hear (if so I might meet with Christ in publick) God made some watchmen speak to my condition particularly, as if one had acquainted them with it.*

Secondly, Her improving of this opportunity (coming, as it were, beyond her expectation) follows in the next words: She cries out in an abrupt manner, *Saw ye him?* she thinks they can help her, being acquaint with such cases, and therefore she will consult them; that is, she follows in, upon the little experience she had felt of their skill, to seek for help from them, and for that end to communicate her case to them, as it were after sermon is done, or when some convenient time offers. *Obs.* 1. That believers, that are serious, will let no fit opportunity for meeting with Christ pass; they are accurate observers and frugal managers of them all. 2. She observes and is glad when a word speaks home to her case, and finds her: and this is indeed the disposition of a sound and serious believer. 3. Ministers would be well

well acquaint themselves with soul-sickness, and expert in the various exercises and cases incident to the people of God, both in order to the finding out their disease, and the cause of it (who often can scarce make language of their own condition themselves) and also in order to the making suitable applications for the cure of it; for this is to have *the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season*. 4. Believers often can say little of their cases, but in a broken and confused way; which says, ministers had need to be the better acquainted with the spiritual cases and exercises of souls, that they may understand by half a word what they would say. 5. Believers would advert well to whom they communicate their case; this would not be done to all. 6. Ministers are suitable physicians (tho' not the sole or only Physician) to whom believers would make known their soul-exercises and cases; and therefore there should be much spiritual sympathy betwixt their people and them. 7. It is a great encouragement to a distressed soul, to impart its case to a minister, when in his publick doctrine he useth to speak pertinently unto it. 8. It is not unsuitable for exercised souls (beside the publick hearing of their minister) to have their particular queries to him in private. 9. How Christ shall be obtained, is a suitable subject for ministers and people, in their converse together, to be mainly taken up with; and holy anxiety concerning this, is a frame fit for making addressees to ministers: they may indeed come to ministers with such questions, who are much in longing after him. 10. There may be much tenderness in affection and love, where there is much weakness in knowledge: He is the *him* whom her soul loveth, even now when she knows not where he is; and the most grown believers may be sometimes brought to this low ebb in their condition, for good ends, and for demonstrating the usefulness and necessity of publick ordinances, even to them. 11. An exercised soul prizeth most a ministry; and such spiritual exercises (as are here mentioned) do cherish their esteem of that ordinance, when other debates among a people often do derogate from its due esteem. 12. Ministers would not cast affection, nor reject zeal in weak Christians, even tho' these be joined with some infirmities, and may occasion some more trouble to themselves: but where sincerity is, there would be an overcoming condescendence as to both these; and the questions of a tender soul should be by them entertained, as having learned at their Master, *not to break a bruised reed*. 13. Tender exercised souls usually confine their questions to their own souls case: There is no abstract curious query here, nor for the fashion proposed, nor any needless debate about extrinsick things, or the faults or practice of others; but, *Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?* This is the sore upon which she keeps her finger, and this is the wound which she keeps bleeding, till he bind it up.

Thirdly, The success of her meeting with the watchmen, and of this query she

she puts to them, tho' it be not expressed, yet it is implied in the first words of the next verse; which being compared with this, holds out two things, *1st*, That she did not presently find an outgate from under her sad case; for she behoved to go further. *2dly*, It was but a little further that she is put to go, till she find him; which says, that her endeavours were not altogether fruitless. *Obs.* 1. Christ will sometimes let believers know, that all means without him are empty, and that he is affixed to none of them; yea, nor to any fellowship, no not of the most powerful minister. 2. Publick means do not alway bring present ease unto believers under disquieting cases; yet (to say so) they dispose and make way for it in private: and one may get the good of an ordinance, and of fellowship with ministers or Christians, tho' not in the mean time, yet afterward, even when they are retired at home; and it is as good a time thereafter, yea, and better for their behoof.

If it be asked here, *what we should judge of these watchmen, if they were tender or not?* The ground of the doubt is, because, *chap. 5. 7.* watchmen that are not tender are spoken of, which yet are there said to find the Bride. *Ans.* There is a twofold finding, *1st*, When one searches an exercised condition for this end, that he may contribute something for the exercised person's ease and help. *2dly*, When one follows or searches after tenderness in others, that he may find some advantage against them, thereby to make the heart of the righteous sad; the one finds, as a friend finds another; the other, as an enemy or mocker finds another. The first sort of finding is to be understood here in this chapter, for the watchmen here carry as friends; the second sort of finding, *chap. 5. 7.* for there they carry as mockers: Which will appear by these differences, 1. Here she propones her case to them for their help, it is like, being encouraged thereto, by their finding out her case before in the preaching of the word; but, *chap. 5. 7.* she doth no such thing. 2. When they find her, *chap. 5. 7.* they smite her and put her to shame, which makes her silent; but their finding her here, doth encourage her. 3. Tho' here she find not Christ instantly, yet she says not as in the former steps, *I found him not*; she could not altogether say so, and immediately after she finds him: but, *chap. 5.* she goes long seeking him after she meets with the watchmen; yea, goes from them heavier, and more wounded than when she came: And this Song being to hold forth the various conditions of a believer, and it being incident to them sometimes to fall in tender hands, and sometimes, yea, often in the hands of such as are rough and untender, we judge it safest to understand this place of the first, and *chap. 5.* of the last; and especially because this makes most for the believer's instruction and consolation, which is here aimed at, and this is more suitable to the scope of the Song, than that both should be understood one way.

Verse 4. *It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.*

The beginning of this verse contains the last step of the Bride's carriage, and also her desired success; *She went a little further, and but a little, and she finds him whom her soul loveth.* Publick ordinances, and fellowship with godly men, are very useful and necessary, but not to be rested on; and they who find not the desired outgate by these, would not immediately give over the business as desperate and hopeless; for there is something even beyond these to be aimed at, *a little further* must be gone; which is the first thing in the verse: And we conceive it doth import these two, 1<sup>st</sup>, A more immediate going to Christ himself; as if the ministers had said, *Ye must go over and beyond means, to Christ himself; and denying these, lean and rest, and that wholly, on him.* They go beyond means, that rest not on them, and are denied to them in the use of them; as that man, *Matth. 17. 14.* that brought his son to the disciples, to get the devil cast out; and when that did it not, he went not away, but stayed for Christ himself, and told the case to him. Christ can do when means fail; and we would trust him, when they seem to disappoint us: How feckless are the best of ministers, when himself is not present? 2<sup>dly</sup>, *This going a little further* doth not import the doing of any duties she had not done, but a more vigorous and lively manner of going about these: There had some heartlesness, unbelief and indisposition stuck to her, in all the former steps and strugglings; now she steps further in, and goes forward in the use of these same means; and not speaking to the minister, when she finds that the moving of his lips cannot assuage her grief, she looks thorow to the Master, and vigorously addresses her self to the exercise of faith in him, of prayer to him, &c. in a more serious way than she had done before. *Obs. 1.* Sometimes believers may lay too much weight on outward and publick means; they may rest too much there, and go no further than these. 2. It is God's goodness, by disappointments in means, to train his people on to a further length of power and life in their practice. 3. It may be, when a believer hath satisfied himself in going about all external means, and that in the due order, and hath neglected none of them, that there is still somewhat more to do, as to the bettering of his inward frame. 4. It is not a desperate business, nor are believers forthwith to conclude that their hope is perished, because they have not attained their desire in the use of means for a time. 5. It is not a less practice in soul-exercises, to go over and beyond means and ordinances

ces in suing for Christ, than to go about them; and the last is no less necessary than the first. 6. Believers, in the use of means, would joyn these three together, *1st*, Making conscience of means; And yet, *2dly*, For the success, looking higher than they; And, *3dly*, Not stumbling when they find not instantly ease or satisfaction by them.

The second thing here is her success, which is according to her desire, *I found him*, saith she; *When I had pressed but a little further, he sensibly and surprisingly made himself known to me.* *Obs.* 1. Christ is not far off from his people when they are seeking him, whatever they may think when he hides himself. 2. They who love Christ, and conscionably follow all means for obtaining of him, are not far from finding, nor he far from manifesting himself to them. 3. They who sincerely press forward to the life of ordinances beyond the form, and by faith take themselves to Christ himself for the blessing, not resting on their performances, will not long miss Christ; yea, it may be, he will give them a sensible manifestation of himself sooner than they are aware; for, *the Spirit is obtained, not by the works of the law, but by the hearing of faith*, Gal. 3. 2. 4. A soul that sincerely loves Christ, should not (and, when in a right frame, will not) give over seeking Christ till it find him, whatever disappointments it meets with; and sure, such will find him at last. 5. Christ found after much search, will be very welcome, and his presence then will be most discernable. 6. Believers would no less observe and acknowledge their good success in the means, than their disappointments: There are many who often make regrades of their bonds, that are deficient in acknowledging God's goodness when they get liberty.

Next, In this verse we have her carriage set down, when she hath found him; She doth not then lay-by diligence, as if all were done, but is of new taken up with as great care to retain and improve this mercy, as before she was solicitous to attain it: Whether a believer want or have, whether he be seeking or enjoying, there is still matter of exercise for him in his condition. This her care to retain Christ (which is the fourth thing in the first part of this chapter) is laid down in three steps. 1. She endeavours to hold him, that she again lose not the ground she had gained. 2. She seeks to have other members of that same Church getting good of Christ also: And these two are in this verse. 3. When his presence is brought back to the Church and ordinances, her care is to admonish, yea, charge that he be entertained well with them, lest they should provoke him to be gone, *verse 5.*

The first step then of her care is, *I held him, and would not let him go*: As a wife having found her husband, whom she much longed for, hangs on him lest he depart again, so doth she; which is an expression both of her fear, love, care and faith. This *holding* of Christ, and not letting him go, imports,

R

*1st,*

1<sup>st</sup>, A holy kind of violence, more than ordinary, wherewith the Bride strives and wrestles to retain him. 2<sup>dly</sup>, That Christ (as it were) waits for the believer's consent in this wrestling, as he saith to *Jacob*, *Gen. 32. 26. I pray let me go* : Which upon the matter seems to say, *I will not go, if thou wilt hold me, and have me stay*. 3<sup>dly</sup>, It imports an importunate adhering to him, and not consenting upon any terms to quit him. And lastly, It imports the singular and inexpressible satisfaction she had in him ; her very life lay in the keeping him still with her, and therefore she holds him, and cannot think of parting with him. Now this presence of Christ, being spiritual, cannot be understood in a carnal way, nor can they be carnal grips that retain him ; and his power being omnipotent, it cannot be the force of a frail creature that prevails, but it is here as in *Hos. 12. 2, 3*. In *Jacob's* prevailing, *he wept and made supplication* ; that is, an humble, ardent suing to him by prayer, with a lively exercise of faith on his promises (whereby he allows his people to be pressing) engageth him to stay : He is tyed by his own love that is in his heart, and his faithfulness in his promises, that he will not withdraw, and deny them that, for which they make supplication to him, more than if he were by their strength prevailed over, and overcome ; as a little weeping child will hold its mother or nurse, not because it is stronger than she, but because the mother's bowels so constrain her, as she cannot almost, tho' she would leave that child ; so Christ's bowels yearning over a believer, are that which here holds him, that he cannot go ; he cannot go, because he will not. Here we have ground to observe the importunateness of sincere love, which is such, as with a holy wilfulness it holds to Christ, and will not quit him ; as *Jacob* said, *I will not let thee go*. 2. We may observe here the power of lively faith, to which nothing is impossible : Love and faith will stick to Christ, against his own seeming intreaties, till they gain their point, and will prevail, *Gen. 32. 28*. 3. See here the condescending, the wonderful condescending of the Almighty, to be held by his own creature, to be (as it were) at their disposal ; *I pray thee, let me go*, *Gen. 32. 26*. and *Exod. 32. 10. Let me alone, Moses* : So long as a believer will not consent to quit Christ, so long keeps their faith grip of him, and he will not offend at this importunity ; yea, he is exceedingly well pleased with it. It cannot be told how effectual prayer and faith would be, if fervent and vigorous.

The second step of her carriage, which is the scope of the former, namely of her holding him, is in these words, *till I had brought him to my mother's house, to the chambers of her that conceived me*. By *mother* in scripture is understood the visible Church, which is even the believer's mother, *Hos. 2. 2*. Say to *Ammi* (my people) plead with your *mother*. So, *chap. 1. 6*. this mother hath children, both after the flesh, and after the Spirit, the former hating the  
the

the latter : And, *chap. 8. 5.* it is the mother that hath ordinances, for the Bride's instruction. The Church visible is called the mother, because, 1. By the immortal seed of the word, the Lord begets believers in his Church, to which he is Husband ; and the Father of these children ; she the wife, and mother that conceives them, and brings them up. 2. Because of the covenant-tye that stands betwixt God and the visible Church, whereby she may claim right to him as her Husband (the covenant being the marriage-contract betwixt God and the Church) which is therefore the ground of the former relation of mother. Again, Christ is said to be *brought* into the Church, not only when his ordinances are pure in her, (which is supposed to be here already ; for, *verse 3.* there were watchmen doing their duty, and dispensing pure ordinances) but when there is life in them, the presence and countenance of his Spirit going along with them, that they may be powerful for the end appointed : As it was one thing to have the temple, the type of his Church, and another to have God's presence singularly in it ; so it is one thing to have pure ordinances set up in the Church, and another to have Christ's presence filling them with power : *Now, saith she, when I got Christ, I knew there was many fellow-members of that same Church, that had need of him ; and I was importunate that he might manifest himself in his ordinances there, for their and my good.* Church-ordinances are the allowed and ordinary mean of keeping fellowship with Christ, and they are all empty when he is not there. *Obs.* 1. That even true believers have the visible Church for their mother ; and it is written of them, as their privilege, that *they were born there*, *Psal. 87. 4, 5.* 2. Believers should not disclaim the Church in which they are spiritually begotten and born, nor their fellow-members therein ; but reverence her as the mother that gave them life, and carry respectively toward her as such ; *Honour thy father and thy mother* being a moral command, and the first with promise. See *Psal. 122. 3, 6.* 3. When believers get nearest Christ for themselves, it is then the fit time to deal with him for others, especially for the Church whereof they are members : It is *Moses's* only express suit, *Exod. 34. 9.* when God admits him to his company (in presenting whereof it is said, *verse 8.* he made haste) *I pray thee, O Lord, go amongst us.* 4. It is true tenderness, when one is admitted to more nearness with God than others, not to separate from the Church whereof they were members, and as it were to carry Christ to their own chamber ; but to endeavour to have Christ brought also to the Church, that what is wanting of life amongst her members, or the rest of the children, may be made up by his presence. 5. They who are tender of their own comfort, and of retaining Christ's presence with themselves, will be careful to have others, not yet sensible of their need of it, nor acquaint with it, made partakers thereof also. 6. Believers, in their

serious applications to Christ for the Church whereof they are members, may prevail much, and have much influence for obtaining his presence there, and for the putting of every thing in a better frame for the good of others. 7. A kindly member of the Church is brought up ordinarily in that Church, and by that mother, where they were conceived: therefore she goes back to her mother's house; for they have breasts to nourish, who have a womb to bring forth in this respect; and yet here were both children that hated her, *chap. 1. 6.* and watchmen that smote her, *chap. 5. 7.* yet to this mother's house she goes. In a word, this is, as a kind spouse living in her mother's house, having after long seeking found her husband, will be desirous to have him home with her, not only for their mutual solace, but for the comfort of all the family; so do believers, living yet in the Church, desire to improve their credit and court with Christ, for the good of the whole Church, that where she was conceived, others may be conceived also: Where Christ's ordinances are, there ordinarily are children begotten to God; and where a Church conceives seed, and brings forth to him, it is a token he hath not given her a bill of divorce, nor will disclaim her to be his wife; so much less, the children ought not to disclaim her as their mother: It is a shame that many, who profess to be children, either are not yet conceived, or the mother that conceived them, is despised by them; it is strange if the Father will own such as children, who not only cry out against, but curse their mother, and place a piece of religion in this.

*Verse 5. I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my Love till he please.*

The third part of her care is in this verse: When she hath prevailed with him to give his presence and countenance to her mother's house, then she turns to the daughters of Jerusalem, the visible professors and members of the Church, charging them, that now, seeing Christ is returned, they would be careful to entertain him well, and not to provoke him to withdraw. These words were spoken to in the former chapter, *verse 7.* where they have the same general scope, which is to shew her care of having Christ retained; but in this they differ, there they look to her particular enjoyment of Christ; here they look (as the scope and connexion with the former words shew) to his presence in the Church or her mother's house, lest that should, by the daughters fault, be interrupted: The first shews a believer's care, conjuring all (as it were) that nothing in her might provoke him; this shews what should be the Church's care in reference to his visible presence, and blessing  
(to

(to say so) in his Church: *Now (saith she) Christ is amongst you, O ye who are of my mother's house, beware of putting him away*: And in this she deals with them, as considered in their visible Church-state and relation, and not as real believers; the charge being to all: And therefore, in the following verse, and chap. 8. 5. the daughters return an answer, which they do not, chap. 2. 7. because here she directs her words to the visible professors; whereas, chap. 2. 7. her scope was only to compose her self, seeing the presence she enjoyed was only to her particular sense. Here, *Obs.* 1. As there is more of Christ's sensible presence, and also of distance from him, in his way with particular believers at one time than another; so is there, in respect of his way to his Church: sometime he is not in the mother's house, sometimes he is. 2. As every believer should endeavour to retain Christ in his presence with their own souls, so all the members of a visible Church should be careful to prevent his departure from his ordinances. 3. Often it is with Christ's presence in his Church, as it is with the condition of particular believers in it; if they be secure, and he away from them, then often he is from the *mother's house* also; if they be lively, and he with them, then he is brought back again to the Church with them. 4. As Christ may withdraw, if provoked and not entertained, from a private believer, so he will do from a Church, if they hold not fast what they have received, and walk not answerably thereto. 5. Church-members, by their sins, have much influence on Christ's removal from amongst them; yea, sometimes it may come to pass, when the body of a Church turn despisers of the Gospel, that no intercession of the godly, for preventing his departure, will prevail, even tho' *Noah, Daniel and Job* were amongst them, *Jer.* 15. 1. and *Ezek.* 14. 14. 6. Believers, that know the hazard of provoking Christ, and what a loss the loss of his presence is, would interpose seriously with new unexperienced beginners, and give them warning faithfully concerning this their hazard. 7. As a believer, in respect of the visible Church, stands under the relation of a child to a mother; so, in respect of visible professors, they stand under the relation of brethren and sisters, and would keep religious communion with them, even as such, that being an external duty that lieth upon them. 8. True love to Christ will be affected even with the wrongs that others do to him who is their Beloved, and will endeavour to prevent his being wronged and provoked, as she doth here. 9. True love to others, will not only put to pray and intercede for them, and employ all the court the believer hath with Christ for their good (as the Bride did in the former verse) but will also manifest itself in giving faithful admonitions, advertisements, &c. and in doing what else may prevent sin in them.

## Daughters of Jerusalem.

Verse 6. *Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrhe and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?*

The visible professors having now gotten a serious charge (because they are not easily engaged; and it marrs the good of our fellowship one with another in admonitions and warnings, when we are not serious even in the manner of our dealing with others) they are some way put in a little piece of warmth and admiration more than ordinary (as ordinarily Christ's return to a Church and his ordinances in it, after a palpable decay, hath some stir and affectionate-like motions accompanying it, such as was to be found in *John's* hearers, *John* 5. 35.) And in this affected and stirred condition they answer the Bride's charge, *O who is this?* say they, importing they have more respect to the godly, and shew forth more evidences of it in their expressions, than ever they used formerly to do.

That these are the words of the *daughters of Jerusalem*, may be cleared from these things, 1. That they are placed on the back of her charge to them; and when she charges, they use to answer (as *chap.* 5. 9. and 8. 5.) and then she proceeds to speak to them: Even so it is here; for the words hold forth a mutual conference betwixt her and them, and therefore the words of this verse will be most pertinently understood as spoken by them. 2. They are the same words on the matter, and spoken on the same occasion with these, *chap.* 8. 5. which we will find to be spoken by them. 3. They can agree to none other. To say, they are the words of angels, is not warrantable, they not being a speaking party in this Song: To say, they are the Bride's own words, will not suit with the commendation that is given to her, and of her in them, as by a distinct party: Neither can they be Christ's words spoken immediately by him; for, *Chap.* 8. 5. where these words upon the matter are repeated, she is said to ascend, *leaning on her Beloved*; and he is spoken of, and looked on as a third, both from the Bride and the speaker. It remains then, that they must be the words of the *daughters of Jerusalem*, wondring at the change that was to be seen on the Church, her case being now compared with what it was before; and wondring at believers in her, upon the same account also, as almost mistaking them, and so they speak as having other affections to them than what they had before. It is like that wondring expression, *Isa.* 49. 21. *Thou shalt say* (to wit, when the sudden change comes) *Who hath begotten me these?* or, as it is, *Rev.* 3. 9. where it is promised to the Church of *Philadelphia*, that others should fall down, and wor-  
ship

*ship at her feet*, as being convinced now, that Christ *loves* his Church. And that this verse is spoken of the Bride, the words in the Original, being in the feminine gender, puts it out of question; for they are in the Original, as if it were said, *Who is she that cometh up?* &c.

The words contain a commendation of the Church, expressed both in the matter, and also in the manner of the expression (being by way of question) and it is given by visible professors, some whereof may be more tender than others, yet both contradistinguished from the Bride. The commendation hath three parts, or steps. *First*, She *cometh*, or (as it is, chap. 8. 5.) *ascends from the wilderness*. It is like, before this manifestation of Christ, the Church was dry and withered-like, in a wilderness condition, without any beauty or lustre; but now that condition is changed, when Christ is present, she ascends and comes out of it: And this wilderness, considering her ascent from it, signifies the world, wherein believers sojourn in the way to heaven (as *Israel* did in the wilderness to *Canaan*) and wherein there is no true content, nor satisfying rest sought by them, nor to be found by any; therefore is their back on it, tho' formerly they seemed to be settled in it with the rest of the world: Thus the heavenliness of believers in their conversation is set out.

*Secondly*, She comes *like pillars of smoke*: This looks not in all things to ordinary smoke, but (as the after-words do clear) to the *smoke of incense*, &c. Now she ascends like smoke in a calm day, and like pillars of it together, making heaven-ward, as the smoke of incense, which being commanded in God's worship, was acceptable to him: And as smoke flying from kindled fire cannot but ascend, and fire (especially new kindled) cannot but have smoke, and that in abundance; so now the Church being warmed, and of fresh inflamed and made lively with Christ's presence, cannot but send out a sweet savour, which discernably ascends upward from the world (which is but a wilderness) as smoke doth from the earth.

*Thirdly*, She is *perfumed with myrrhe and frankincense, and all the powders of the merchant*: That is, as precious powders are used to make one savoury, so the believer being replenished with the graces of Christ's Spirit, (often in this Song compared to sweet spices, chap. 1. 12. and 4. 6, 13, 14, 16, &c.) and these graces being now quickened by his presence, they cast a delightful savour to them with whom such believers converse: So it was, *Acts 2. ult.* and the ordinances, being powerful and lively, will have such a powerful influence, as to be a *sweet savour in every place*, 2 Cor. 2. 14, 15. and to leave some conviction of their amiableness and excellency, even upon the consciences of these who will never get good of them, so that there is no costly ointment or powder, that will so perfume a person or place, as the Gospel will do a Church; especially when, immediately on the back of Christ's return, he  
doth

doth in an extraordinary manner countenance the dispensing of his own ordinances ; so that even the temporary believer is made in a manner to receive the gospel with joy.

Next, the manner of the expression is by way of question, and admiration, *Who is this ?* say they, we never saw the like of her, she hath no match ; and so the question expresseth a wonderful beauty and loveliness in her, and a great conviction and astonishment in them. In reference to which two, these things are to be learned, 1. That there is nothing more lovely and savoury in it self, than grace exercised in a believer's walk, and Christ's ordinances beautified with his own presence in his Church. 2. That where Christ's ordinances in his Church, and the graces of his Spirit in the hearts of his people, are made lively with his presence, they will be in their beauty very discernable to others, and will be much admired, spoken of, and commended by them. 3. That this beauty is usually most fresh, when Christ returns to his people and Church, after he hath been a while away ; for then tenderness is in life among them. 4. The world in it self, and being compared with Christ's Church (especially in their estimation, whose eyes God hath opened) is but a miserable wilderness, and cannot give a heartsom being or place of abode to a believer. 5. Believers have a more noble design to compass, than to sit down and take up their rest in this world ; their faces bend upward, and their backs are upon it. 6. Christ's presence gives life to a believer's motion, and ravisheth them upward ; as fire put to fewel, necessitates smoke to ascend. 7. A heavenly-minded believer is a comely sight ; and a world-denied professor will extort a commendation, even from ordinary on-lookers. 8. As there is more of the exercise of true grace amongst believers, by Christ's more than ordinary presence with them, and in his Church ; so there is often a more than ordinary warmth and motion in the generality of Church-members, at such a time, whereof yet many may be unsound, as no question all the daughters of *Jerusalem* were not sound. 9. The Church of Christ, and believers in it, will look much more beautiful to professors at one time than at another, and they will be much more taken with this beauty sometimes than at other times ; for, chap. 1. 5. 6. the daughters of *Jerusalem* were in hazard to stumble at her spots ; here they are ravished with her beauty, as thinking her another thing than she was before. 10. Christ's presence will indeed put another face, both on a Church and person, and make them every way different (but still to the better) from what they were. 11. The more active believers be, in exercising their graces, they will have the more fresh relish and savour ; for, her *ascending* here, makes all her perfumes to flow.

BRIDE.

## BRIDE.

Verse 7. Behold his bed, which is Solomon's, threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel.

Verse 8. They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night.

The Bride, being commended in the former verse by the daughters of Jerusalem, as being jealous that they gazed upon her, to the prejudice of the Bridegroom, and being ever restless till every commendable thing that is in her, redound to his praise, to whom she owes and from whom she derives all her beauty: She steps in hastily with a *Behold*, as having a far more wonderful and excellent object to propound to them, to wit, Christ Jesus, the true Solomon himself, whose loveliness and glory should take them all up, rather than any poor perfections they saw in her.

That this is the scope, the matter will clear, especially *verse 11.* where, what she would be at, is propounded in plain terms; and her sudden coming in with a *Behold*, as in *chap. 1. 6.* doth confirm it. That they are the Bride's words also, the scope and connexion bear it out; this being her disposition, that she can suffer no commendation from Christ, nor from any other, to stay or rest upon her, but is restless till it be turned over to his praise, as *chap. 1. 16. & 2. 3. &c.* There is none so tender of him, or jealous of his honour, as Christ's Bride is. Again, the daughters being spoken unto, and Christ spoken of as a third person, it can be no other that speaks here, but the Bride: *What? (saith she) are ye taken with any loveliness ye see in me? I will propose to you a far more excellent object.* And this short, but very sweet discourse, holds forth Christ, lovely and glorious, in three most excellent steps, wherein, by a notable gradation, Solomon is ever mentioned, his name (who was a special type of Christ) being borrowed to design him, while his glory is set forth. He is described, 1. From his bed, *ver. 7, 8.* whereby is set forth, the excellent happiness and quietness that believers have in enjoying him. 2. From his chariot, a most stately piece of work, by which is signified that excellent mean (to wit, the covenant of redemption revealed and preached) whereby our Lord Jesus brings his people to his rest, *ver. 9, 10.* 3. She propounds his own most excellent self, and that crowned with the stately majesty and glory of his love, beyond which there is no step to proceed; but here she sits, and willeth all others to be taken up, in beholding him, as the only desirable and heart-ravishing object, *verse 11.*

For opening of the first, in the 7th and 8th verses, we have these five things

things to consider ; 1. Who this *Solomon* is. 2. What this *bed* is. 3. What this guard, that is about it, doth signifie. 4. For what end that guard is appointed. 5. The use of the note of attention, *Behold*, which is prefixed.

1<sup>st</sup>, By *Solomon*, *David's* son properly is not understood, this scope will not agree to him (he was indeed a great king, but a greater than *Solomon* is here :) therefore, seeing in scripture, *Solomon* was typical of Christ, as from *Psal.* 72. and other places, may be gathered, through all these verses, by *Solomon* is understood Christ, the Beloved and Bridegroom, who especially was typified by *Solomon* in these things ; 1. *Solomon* had a great kingdom, from the river to the sea ; and so will our Lord have many subjects. 2. As *Solomon* was, so Christ is, a powerful, rich King ; our Lord Jesus hath all power in heaven and earth committed to him. 3. *Solomon* was a royal, magnificent king, fought unto from all parts of the earth ; and so the name and glory wherewith the Mediator is furnished, is above every name in heaven and in earth. 4. *Solomon* was a wise, judicious king, and singular for that ; and so in our Lord Jesus dwells all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ; there is no need to fear, that any thing that concerns his people will miscarry in his hand. 5. *Solomon* had a peaceable reign (for which cause he had that name) and his government was blessed and happy to his people and servants ; and so our Lord Jesus is the Prince of peace, *Isa.* 9. 6. and of his government there is no change ; and happy are his subjects, and blessed are his servants ; for, the one half of his glory, magnificence, wisdom, &c. and of their happiness, can neither be told nor believed. This is an excellent Person, and a most stately King, who yet is the believer's Bridegroom : Christ's Bride is nobly and honourably matched.

2<sup>dly</sup>, By *bed*, here, is understood the same thing that was signified by it, *chap.* 1. 16. to wit, that access, nearness and familiarity, that the believer hath with Christ, and whereunto he admits them that are his ; and the rest, solace and refreshment that they enjoy in fellowship with him : *Beds* being especially appointed for these two, 1. For refreshing and rest, *Isa.* 57. 2. and *Psal.* 132. 3. 2. For the mutual fellowship of husband and wife. So then, by this is holden forth the excellent, refreshing and soul-ease, that a believer may have in the enjoying of Christ : There is no bed that can give quietness, rest and solace, like this. Again, it is called *his bed*, (1.) To distinguish it from hers, *chap.* 3. 1. There is great odds betwixt the two, as was hinted upon that verse. (2.) To shew, that altho' she be admitted to it (and therefore it is called *ours*, *chap.* 1. 16.) yet it is wholly procured and framed by him alone. (3.) It is called *his*, to shew the communion that a believer hath with Christ in his refreshings. O sweet ! It is Christ's own bed, if he ly well, they ly well who are married to him ; it is his peace which they enjoy here, *My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you*, *Jo.* 14. 27. And it is his glory and throne

throne that they are made partakers of hereafter, when they are set down on the same throne with him. Again, it is called *his bed*, which is Solomon's which expression is added, to shew where the weight of this wonderful refreshing lies, to wit, in this, that the rest (which he invites them to behold) is no mean man's, it is *Solomon's*; yea, a greater than *Solomon's*, whose curtains and hangings are much above his, *chap. 1. 6.* If *Solomon's* servants were happy that were admitted to his presence, how wonderfully happy are believers, *Christ's Bride*, who are admitted to his own bed: The dignity of believing, and union with him, would be read out of the dignity and glorious majesty of the person with whom we are united.

3dly, There is a guard mentioned here, which, in relation to Christ, shews his stateliness, and, in relation to us, shews our safety and security ; that as kings (and it is like *Solomon*) used to be attended by guards, for stateliness and security, that quietly they may rest (their guards watching about them ) so this rest that a believer hath in Christ, O it is sure! there is an excellent guard compassing them about. It is particularly described, 1. In its number, they are *sixty*, that is a competent and sufficient number. 2. They are *valiant*, gallant, courageous men, that will not fail to execute orders: They are the *choice men of Israel*, that *Solomon* had to watch his bed ; they are *choice ones* our Lord makes use of for the security of believers. 3. They are orderly disposed for their security, they are *about it*, on all hands ; there can be no approach made upon believers, to the prejudice of the repose they have in Christ. 4. They are well armed, yea, always at their arms, in a posture of defence, *they all hold swords* ; none of them wants arms, and they have them still in readiness. 5. They are not only stout, but skilful, *expert* men, who have been tried and well proven: None of his people needs to suspect Christ's watch over them, dexterous is he is preserving poor souls. 6. *Every one hath his sword girt on his thigh*, and is standing at his post. All the expressions tend to shew, that here, and here only, in Christ's bed, may a soul rest secure : there is no access for wrath to seize upon them that are in Christ, nor to devils to pull them from Christ ; for, he and his Father are stronger than all, and *none is able to pluck them out of his hand*. Believers have a notable security and defence, Christ's bed and his guard ; if he be sure, they are sure ; one watch watcheth both him and her. The same power of God, *Isa.* 27. 2. the *twenty thousand of angels*, which are his *chariots*, *Psal.* 68. 17. are for the believer's protection in Christ's company, *pitching their tents about them*, *Psal.* 34. 8. In a word, they are not only guarded with angels, but with divine attributes, the wisdom and power of God, and this makes them dwell in safety.

4thly, The end of all this is, *for fear in the night*: There are no nights to Christ himself, and so no fear; yea, *Solomon* the type, having such a peace-  
S 2 able

able kingdom, it is not like he had much fear ; but the fear is in respect of believers, who are admitted to Christ's company and fellowship : For preventing their fears, he hath settled all firmly, as if guards were set for their security. Hence we gather, that the believer is supposed to be in the bed with him, otherwise there is no use of this guard ; and *his bed* here is a piece of work that is framed not only for himself, but also for the daughters of Jerusalem, as the following chariot is. By *night* here is understood believers darkness and lightless conditions (to speak so) wherein fears, doubts, challenges, &c. are most ready to assault, as afrightmentments use to besal men in the night. These words, *because of fear* in the night, hold forth the use that our *Solomon* hath of that guard, to wit, for quieting his poor people, against the doubtings, difficulties, discouragements, &c. and such-like, whereto believers are so subject, in their drooping, night-conditions ; tho', when light shines, they are little troubled. These words shew, 1. That Christ's Bride, admitted to fellowship with him, may have her black and dark nights. 2. That believers, who have thought themselves above doubtings and fears, when things went well with them ; yet, in nights of temptation, darkness and trial, they may be overtaken with many sad fears : It is not always day with them ; and when it is night with them, they are apt to fear. 3. That believers, in their nights, and under their fears, have good security and an excellent guard ; yea, their safety and defence is as good then, as when there is no night nor fear : How dark soever their night be, Christ's guard will sufficiently preserve them. 4. Christ is tender even of believers fears, and hath provided so well for their peace, as he hath appointed means, not only to prevent their hurt, but also to prevent their fears ; for, *because of fear* hath he appointed this guard. 5. There is no king or monarch so well attended and guarded, or who may sleep so secure and sound as a believer : His guard is still at their post, and they are valiant men, that cannot fail ; for, (1.) He is at peace with God ; and he that is within the peace of God, hath the warrant, right and advantage of it to *guard the heart and mind*, Phil. 4. 7. (2.) The believer hath all the promises, and confirmations of oath and seals, *in which it is impossible for God to lie*, to secure and quiet him. (3.) He hath the watch of *angels*, Psal. 34. 7. *pitching their tents about him*, and *chariots of angels* waiting on him. (4.) He hath God himself, and his almighty power for his defence, who *alone* may make *him dwell in safety* ; wherefore he may ly down with confidence, and also sleep with quietness, Psal. 4. 8. It is good sleeping in Christ's bed, there is not so good rest to be found any where in the world : So then, by the guard is understood whatever contributes for confirming believers faith, and strengthening them against their fears of being interrupted in their rest, which (being in Christ) is allowed upon them.

stoly,

5thly, A *behold* is prefixed to all this, and that deservedly, 1. To shew the wonderfulness of what she was to say : O how wonderful is it, if believed ! 2. To provoke and stir up to observe and take notice of it : Few are acquaint with believers privileges ; and if they had not been recorded in the word, we durst never have likened or evened our selves to them. 3. It is to shew an holy impatience in her affection, in breaking in so with this discourse, as more fervently desirous to fill their mouths and hearts with the commending of Christ, than what they were about in commending of her : A notable diversion and sign of love in a friend of the Bridegroom, who with *John* the Baptist is content to decrease, so he may increase. True believers should and will endeavour more the commendation of Christ, in their fellowship together, than to commend any grace, gift, or what else they have gotten from him : they will not conceit, or cry up their graces and gifts as they are theirs, for that were base ingratitude ; but withal they mention what they have received, partly to indear him to themselves, and partly to commend him to others : and thus they design to return him his own with advantage, wherein nevertheless they are the gainers, even while they seem to give what they have received.

Verse 9. *King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.*

Verse 10. *He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple ; the midst thereof being paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem.*

The second piece of work, mentioned, for the commendation of the Worker, is a chariot, described at large *vers.* 9, 10. For clearing of the words, we are to inquire concerning these three things, 1<sup>st</sup>, Its Worker or Former. 2<sup>dly</sup>, The end for which it is framed. 3<sup>dly</sup>, Concerning this chariot itself.

The Author or Maker thereof is *Solomon*, and that *King Solomon*, that is Christ, as was cleared before : he is mentioned thrice under this name ; but there is a gradation here that is observable. (1.) He is called *Solomon*, verse 7. (2.) *King Solomon*, verse 9. (3.) *King Solomon crowned*, or, *crowned King Solomon*, verse 11. The longer she speaks of Christ, and insists in mentioning his excellency, her thoughts draw the deeper, she sets him up the higher, and becomes warmer in her apprehensions, affections and expressions concerning him ; acquaintance with him would make one speak eloquently of him : He that is the Worker and Former of this chariot, is a most excellent King ; it must needs then be a stately, royal piece of work.

Secondly, There are two ends mentioned wherefore he makes it. 1<sup>st</sup>, It is

to himself, that is, for his own glory, and that thereby he may in a special way hold forth himself to be glorious, and that particularly in his grace; for, tho' he made all things for himself, yet is he said especially to manifest his glory in doing good to his people; and what serves for the manifestation of his grace, is in a peculiar manner made for himself: So, *Isa. 43. 7, 21. This people have I formed for my self* (in a far other way than he formed other nations) *they shall* (in a singular way) *shew forth my praise, that is, the praise of his goodness, wherein his way was peculiar to them*: And the paving of this chariot with love, and appointing of it for the daughters of Jerusalem, doth confirm this also, that it is the praise of grace that especially shines in this piece of work. And so the second end, subordinate to the former, is in the end of verse 10. in these words, *for the daughters of Jerusalem, that is, for their good that are weak and far short of perfection*; it is not only fitted for his glory, but also it is fitted and confirmed to them, so as it may procure and bring about their good. *Obs. 1.* In the greatest pieces of Christ's workmanship he had mind of poor sinners yet unglorified; his *delight* was with them *before the world was*, *Prov. 8. 31.* *2.* The glorifying of grace is the great thing Christ aims at in all his contrivance and way toward his Church and people. *3.* He hath knit his own glory and the good of his people together; that same work which is for himself, is also for them, that if he obtain his end, they cannot but be well; his glory and their good *ride* (to say so) *in one chariot.* *4.* For as stately a person as our Lord Jesus is, he disdains not to be occupied in making works, and as it were framing chariots, for the behoof of his people: Rather than they should want what may further them in their way, he will make and furnish them himself.

*Thirdly,* The third thing is the work itself, which indeed is very admirable, as the Worker and ends are: It is a *chariot*, several ways described, both in its matter, form and furniture. The word translated *chariot* is no where else in scripture, it is translated *bed* on the margin; it is by the *Septuagints* expressed by such a word as signifieth to be *carried*, and to *carry*, as chariots and litters (wherein men are carried) used to be carried by horses: We think it fitly expressed by *chariot*, not only because the word is different from that which is translated *bed*, verse 7. but, *first*, the immediate end and use seems to be different also: for, as stately kings use their beds for repose and rest, in their chambers, and their chariots to ride in, when they go abroad, and wherein their queens may ride with them; so is it here. As Christ hath a bed for believers quieting, he hath also a chariot for safe conveying and carrying them through their journey, till they come to their complete rest; this being no less necessary for believers (such as the daughters of Jerusalem are) than the former.

In

In short, by this *chariot* we understand the way of redemption in general, as it is contrived in the eternal counsel of God, and so called the covenant of redemption, and also as it is preached and manifested to us in the Gospel. The reasons why we thus apply it, are, not only because there is no other thing that it will agree unto; for, 1. It is a work of Christ, and so not Christ himself. 2. It is a work of special grace for his own, and that while they are in the way (for the elect in heaven are not daughters of Jerusalem) therefore it is no common work of creation, or providence, or of glory in heaven. 3. It is for the Church's good, and therefore cannot be understood of her; for, beside that the several parts of its description will not suit her, not only Christ, but the daughters of Jerusalem are to be born in this chariot: And we know not a fourth thing imaginable, that can be understood by it, but the covenant of redemption revealed in the Gospel. But, 2dly, The covenant of redemption is that work of Christ's, wherein most eminently the glory of his grace and love to sinners doth appear, which makes him wonderful lovely and admirable; (to set forth which is the present scope) It therefore must be here understood. 3dly, That work is signified by this *chariot*, whereby Christ communicates his love to poor sinners, and carries them through; therefore it is said to be *paved with love* for that end: Now, there is no partaking of special love from Christ, but by this covenant; nor was there ever another mean made, or appointed for conveying love to them, or for bringing them through to the partaking of it, but this same covenant; therefore it must be understood. 4thly, All that is spoken of this *chariot*, as it will be applicable to no other thing, so will it well agree to the covenant of redemption manifested and preached in the Gospel. 1. It may well be compared to a *chariot*, because by it poor believers are carried through as in a chariot, born up and sustained by it, even in the way: Yea, in it and by it they triumph, and ride as in triumph (as he in this Gospel rides prosperously) and if it be that wherein he rides, it must be that wherein they ride also, and therefore well compared to a chariot, because both he and they triumph by it. 2. It is eminently and peculiarly Christ's workmanship; he made this covenant for their behoof, and entered himself surety, undertaking for them, when there was none upon their side of the covenant to undertake but he the Mediator; and therefore is he stiled *Jesus* and *Redeemer*, and it is by his purchase (having procured this unto them) that they are admitted to it, and carried through in it. 3. It is in a peculiar way contrived and framed for the glory of his grace, and the good of his people, as hath been said; by it is manifested in the Church the manifold wisdom of God, and the riches of the grace of Christ: If ever a piece of work was made for the good of sinners, and the glory of grace, this is it, without which all the creatures had been uncomfortable, yea, hurt-

hurtful to them. 4. It may be said to be of the *wood of Lebanon*, that is excellent and durable; for so the wood of *Lebanon* was, for which cause it was made use of in building of the temple: And so all the materials of this covenant, and its properties, are excellent and durable; it is an everlasting covenant, that fails not, and vanishes not away, but endures for ever. 5thly, The form is suitable also, *He made the pillars thereof* (saith she) *of silver*. Pillars in a piece of work signify, 1. Decoring. 2. Order-lines. 3. Statelines; for which cause, when *wisdom builds her house*, Prov. 9. 1, 2. *she heweth out seven pillars*: And *Solomon* made pillars for the temple, the Inscriptions whereof signified their end and use; *Jachin* and *Boaz*, *stability* and *strength*, 2 Chron. 3. 17. And they are as *silver pillars*, to shew their excellency; and so this covenant hath precious promises, as the pillars thereof, able to support believers; and hath all these so well ordered and contrived, that every thing is excellently in its own place: This covenant is therefore said to be *well ordered in all things and sure*; the pillars will not shrink, shake, nor bow, 2 Sam. 23. 5. 6thly, It hath a *bottom*, and that of *gold*: A bottom is to shew its stability and firmness, to sustain and keep up these who ride in it; and gold shews its solidity and preciousness: it is a rich bottom, therefore the new *Jerusalem* is said to have her *streets of pure gold*, Rev. 21. 22. So this covenant hath a sure foundation, elect and precious; this covenant cannot be unbottom'd, and sinners cannot fall through, if once in it. 7thly, It hath a *covering*, and that of *purple*: A cover is to preserve and save from any thing that may fall from above; and purple or scarlet (for in scripture both are one, as may be seen, *Matth.* 27. 28. compared with *Mark* 15. 17.) sets out the excellency and efficacy of that cover; it is not of every thing, it is of purple; and this in scripture was made use of to be dipt in the blood of the sacrifices, *Heb.* 9. 14. which was called, *verse* 20. *the blood of the covenant*, typifying the application of Christ's blood: This is the cover of the covenant, the worth and efficacy of Christ's satisfaction, whereby all in covenant (as it were riding in this chariot) are preserved from the wrath of God, and their sins hid, and so covered by that blood, that they are never called to a reckoning for them, *Psal.* 32. 1, 2. *Jer.* 50. 20. 8thly, *The midst thereof is paved with love*: What can this be? Gold is much, but love is more; what workman but Christ can make this pavement? and what piece of work of his, but the covenant of redemption, is so lined and stuffed with love? *The midst thereof* is the inward of it, as great men in their chariots and coaches have their pillows and cushions of velvets, &c. to repose them: But here there is a far other thing, to repose and rest upon; love lines all this chariot, so that there is none in the covenant, but love is still next them: The word speaks good to them, and all the promises run like pipes with streams of love to them; God's dispensations toward them breathe

breathe out love; they walk on love, sit on love, rest on love; it must be good to be here: And love is reserved for the midst of it, to shew, that tho' its excellency and beauty may some-way shine and glister to these that are without, yet none knows or can know the heart and bowels of the covenant (to say so) and the love that is there, but these that are within. 2. Love is put over the bottom of gold, and made the pavement, (1.) Because love in this covenant condescends lowest to us; and there can be no lower stooping imaginable, than that to which the love of Christ hath made him bow (2.) It is love that makes the riches of Christ applicable to us; we could not walk on that gold, if love paved it not: the freedom of his grace and love makes all refreshful; the believer, even tho' a sinner, may ride and rest here. (3.) It is to hearten a sinner to come in and close with this covenant; and it shews what fits it to be a chariot for them to ride in, it is the pavement of love: a sinner may leap here, there is no hazard to fall; or if he fall, he falls soft, for it is upon love: There will be no rejecting of a sinner that would enter and sit down in it; why? they are to sit, stand, and ly on love, which will cover their infirmities and not contend, otherwise there would be no access to it, nor abiding in it, it would cast them out. Thus doth grace shine in the covenant, as the lining and inside of all the promises, when they are seen; therefore is it peculiarly called the covenant of grace. 9thly, It is for the daughters of Jerusalem: All the work is for them, but especially the pavement of love, it is for them, who, while they are in the way, are subject to infirmities; it is fitted for them to roll on, and rest in, even when sense of sin would otherwise sting and disquiet them: This suits well with that word, 2 Sam. 23. 5. *Although my house be not so with God, but there are many things sinful to be found in it, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things, and sure; This (saith he, when he was to die) is all my salvation, and all my desire.* There needs no more for carrying believing sinners through, and giving them ease under their challenges and perplexities, but this, it is so well suited for believers conditions. From all this she proceeds, verse 11. to point out Christ as precious, this covenant putting as it were the crown of of grace and loveliness on him.

*Obs.* 1. The work of redemption, bringing sinners out of a state of wrath, and carrying them through to glory, is a noble design, a wonderfully excellent work, and hath been deeply contrived. 2. O the excellent wisdom, and wonderful grace that shines in this covenant! 3. They who would rest in Christ's bed, must ride in his chariot; they who would share in his peace, and be admitted to sweet fellowship with him, must accept of his offers, and enter into covenant with him. 4. The weight of all contained in the covenant lies on Christ; therefore it is his workmanship alone, as being the surety

thereof to the Father, the *Messenger* of the covenant to us, and in effect the sum and substance of it himself; therefore is he called *the Covenant*, Isa. 42. 6. 5. Christ hath spared no invention nor cost, to make this covenant large and full for the believer's consolation and happiness. 6. Love is a main ingredient in this work of redemption, and the predominant qualification of this covenant, love being the thing which he chiefly intended to make conspicuous and glorious therein. 7. Every particular of the contrivance of grace will be found more precious than another, every step thereof proceeds to a greater excellency; and therefore there is mention made here, (1.) Of *wood*, (2.) Of *silver*, (3.) Of *gold*, &c. The further in we come in the covenant, we will find it the more rich. 8. Love is here mentioned in the last place, to shew the great excellency of Christ's love unto redeemed sinners; there is something beyond gold, but nothing beyond love, especially that of the Mediator: It is left last also in the description, to leave the daughters of Jerusalem to consider the more of it, as being the great attractive commendation of this work, which should make it amiable and desirable unto them. Love hath the last word, and there is nothing beyond it but himself, whose glory and loveliness is spoken to in the following verse. *Lastly*, Her scope is, 1<sup>st</sup>, To commend Christ; for they will never esteem of him, that are not acquaint with his covenant. 2<sup>dly</sup>, To engage both her self and the daughters to fall more thoroughly in love with him: The right uptaking of the covenant is a most forcible argument for drawing souls to Christ; for, 1. It hath all fulness in it, for the matter. 2. All wisdom, for the manner. 3. All gracious condescending, in the terms. 4. It is most engaging in respect of its end, being made for this same very purpose, and designed for this very end, that it may bring about the peace and salvation of sinners; which considerations exceedingly commend it, and may much strengthen a sinner in applying himself to it. 5. It is most necessary in regard of the salvation of sinners; there is no riding or journeying to heaven, but in this chariot; *No other name by which men can be saved, but the name of Christ*, that is manifested by this covenant.

**Verse 11.** *Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.*

She proceeds, in this verse, to hold forth the Worker of this great work; and altho' all the pieces of the work be admirable, yet hath he much more glory, in as far as the builder is more glorious, and hath more honour than  
the

the house : And because his commendation is her scope, therefore she propounds him in his beauty and glory, with an exhortation filled with admiration ; *If (saith she) ye would wonder, O daughters, &c. here is a wonderful object, Christ himself, on whom all eyes should be fixed ; up therefore, come forth and behold him.* There are four things in the verse, 1. The parties spoken unto. 2. A glorious object propounded to them. 3. This glorious object, being Christ, is qualified and set out in his most lovely and wonderful posture, by three qualifications. 4. A duty in reference to him, so qualified, is called for, and pressed upon the daughters.

*First,* The parties excited and spoken to here, are the *daughters of Zion*. By *Zion* oftentimes in scripture is understood the Church, wherein Christ is set as King, *Psal. 2. 6.* and elsewhere : and so, by *daughters of Zion*, we are to understand members of the Church ; they are the same with the *daughters of Jerusalem* mentioned *verse 5.* and her scope being to speak to them who spoke, *verse 6.* and they being the same to whom she spake, *verse 5.* doth confirm it ; for the words run in one context. They are called here *daughters of Zion*, 1. Because it was for *Zion's* sake that the Lord so much prized *Jerusalem*, *Psal. 87.* 2. his temple and ordinances being especially there. 3. To put the daughters of *Jerusalem* in mind, what was the especial ground of the relation which God owned in them, namely, their being incorporate into his Church, whereby they had access to his ordinances ; and that so they might know, whoever was deficient, yet this duty called for did exceedingly become them, Christ being King of *Zion* : For which cause, elsewhere, *Zech. 9. 9.* the exhortation runs in these terms, *Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh, &c.* It is no little thing to get professors taking up the relation they stand under to Christ, and engaged to walk accordingly.

*Secondly,* The object, proposed to the daughters, is *King Solomon*, even the King of *Zion*, the King of peace, and King of saints, in a word, their King : This relation makes him lovely to them ; yet, it is not Christ simply that is here proposed to their view, but Christ with a crown, in most stately magnificence, such as kings use to be adorned with, when they are in great state, or on their coronation-day. While it is said, *he hath a crown*, hereby is not signified any material crown, but majesty and glory, as *Psal. 21. 3.* *Thou set a crown of pure gold on his head, &c.* And so Christ conquering on the white horse, *Rev. 6. 3.* is said to have a crown : And, *Rev. 19. 12.* it is said, *he hath on his head many crowns*, to shew his great and manifold glory, such as becomes the Prince of the kings of the earth. Every look of Christ is not enough, many thinks not much of him : This shews how Christ's glory is to be seen, and how for that end he is to be considered by on-lookers ; he is to be looked upon as he doth discover and hold forth himself, otherwise his glory will ne-

ver rightly be taken up : And therefore, to help us in this, and to prevent an objection which carnal sense might make against her scope, she qualifies this crown and glory of his, three ways, *First*, It is the crown wherewith his mother crowned him : Where we are to enquire, 1. What different crowns Christ may be said to have, and what this is. 2. Who this mother is. 3. How she is said to crown him.

Christ may be said to have a fourfold glory, or crown, (1.) As God co-essential with the Father ; this crown is not put on him, being natural to him, who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. 1. 2, 3. (2.) He hath a crown and glory as Mediator, in respect of the power, authority and glory wherewith he is invested, as God's great Deputy and Anointed upon the holy hill of Zion, having power and a rod of iron, even in reference to enemies ; and seeing this is not of his mother's putting on, it is not that which is here understood. (3.) He hath a crown and glory, in respect of the manifestation of his glory in the executing of his offices, when he makes his mediatory power and glory apparent in particular steps ; thus sometimes he is said to take his power to him, Rev. 11. 17. and is said to be crowned, when the white horse of the Gospel rides in triumph, Rev. 6. 2. The last step of this glory will be in the day of judgment : In short, this consists in his exercising his former power, committed to him as Mediator. (4.) There is a crown and glory which is in a manner put on him by particular believers, when he is glorified by them, not by adding any thing to his infinite glory, but by their acknowledging of him to be so, especially their acknowledging his rich and free grace, and by believing, putting their seal thereunto, John 3. 33. and giving him glory, as Abraham did, Rom. 4. 20. in which respect he is crowned ; as on the contrary, when he meets not with this, he is despised, and it is a saying upon the matter, *This man shall not reign over us* : Now this last is to be here understood. Again, by mother, here, is not understood his natural mother, but it must be taken in a spiritual sense for one of two ; *1st*, For the Church catholic, which being mother to Christ mystical, may be said to be mother to him ; as Rev. 12. 5. the Church is said to bring forth a man-child, who is taken to heaven, and hath ascribed to him the properties due to Christ, and yet Christ mystical is there understood : Or, *2dly*, For a particular believer, who may be said to be Christ's mother in these respects, 1. For the near relation that is betwixt Christ and particular believers, and the account he hath of them ; for which reason they are called his sister, his spouse, chap. 4. 10. and Matth. 12. ult. he calls them his brother, his sister, yea, mother. 2. Because Christ is formed and brought forth in them, being as it were conceived in every one of them, Gal. 4. 9. Christ (as it were) getting a new being in them, which he had not before. We conceive, both  
may

may be understood here, and the last especially, as serving most to the scope of commending Christ to them: And if the first be included, to wit, the Church universal, then particular believers (being homogeneous parts of the whole) cannot be excluded; for, the Church crowns Christ, when she brings forth children to him, which is, when by the ordinances Christ is begotten in them. Now, they are said to *crown* Christ, and glorify him, not by adding any new degrees of glory to him, considered in himself; but this his being crowned by them, doth especially appear in these three, *1st*, Their high estimation of him, beyond what others have, and what themselves were wont to have: Now he is highly esteemed, who before was despised by them; and whereas to them he wanted a crown and dominion, now he hath it. *2dly*, Their acceptation of him as their King, when by their consent they ratify (as it were) God's donation of the crown to him; and in acknowledging thereof, they submit to his sceptre and government. Thus he is crowned by them, when he is expressly with full consent of the soul acknowledged as King and Lord; even as *David* formerly crowned, anointed and made king over *Israel* by the Lord, is said to be made king by *Judah*, when they accept of him to reign at *Hebron*; and afterward by the ten tribes, in their submission to him, and consenting to the former appointment: Even so believers submission to Christ, is a crowning of him, as to themselves; and so there are particular coronations (to say so) of Christ, even as there are particular espousals betwixt him and believers. *3dly*, This is in respect of the glory, that results to Christ from their submission and acknowledgment: Even as sinners, despising him, put (as it were) a blot on him, put him to open shame, and says, *We will not have him to reign over us*; so believers, yielding up themselves to Christ, do in a manner put honour and glory upon him, *Isa. 62. 2, 3*. The married Church or people are said to be *a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord*, when the grace of Christ hath its native effect amongst them; as the conversion of souls proves to faithful ministers *their crown and joy*, *1 Thess. 2. 14*. so doth it to the great Bishop and Shepherd of souls: And, as *Prov. 12. 4*. a virtuous woman is *a crown or ornament* to her husband, whereas if she be not so, she maketh him ashamed; so are believers some-way a crown to Christ, because all the glory and beauty which is to be found on them, is his, and from him. This then is the meaning, *Consider Christ in the beauty wherein he appears to believers, and with the esteem they have of him, as full of grace and truth, when they acknowledge him, and subject to him, and he will be seen to be exceeding stately and lovely.*

The second qualification confirms this: This crown it put on him in the day of his espousals. Now, Christ's general espousals are not yet come, and so the crown in that respect is not yet put on him; it must be therefore the day  
of

of his espousals with particular believers (which is here understood, there being no other before his second coming) who are, *2 Cor. 11. 2. espoused to him*, by their consenting to accept him for their husband, as he is king to them, by their submitting to his dominion. His being crowned, here, is mentioned with respect to this day of his espousals; because, as bridegrooms used to be most glorious in their marriage-day, so Christ hath, at the time of espousals, a special loveliness to the new married believer; what by the more kindly and tender manifestations of his love, and what by the fresh relish it hath then to them, when their spirits are broke with the sense of their sin, and warm with a deal of holy joy and fainness, which useth then to abound in their heart, in reference to so good a bargain; so Christ is then to believers wonderfully lovely: And altho' the effects of his kindness may be enlarged afterward, and their esteem of him may also grow; yet readily then, as it is most sensible, so their admiration is most in exercise, and their thoughts of Christ's excellent worth are most affectingly, and overcomingly ravishing; and when in their after-thoughts they are taken up with him, the remembering of that day of espousals, when he took them by the hand, puts still a loveliness on him to them, that in his love he so wonderfully condescended unto them.

The *third* qualification confirms the same (for, it is in effect one qualification in three expressions) and it is in these words, *and in the day of the gladness of his heart*; What is it (saith she) that cheers Christ, and makes him heartily glad? It is even this, when poor sinners accept of him, that is, Christ's marriage-day; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride that day, so doth he rejoice: and as *the good Shepherd* rejoiceth when he recovers his *lost sheep*, or the *father* his *prodigal son*, *Luke 15. 32.* so doth Christ when sinners are brought in to him by the Gospel: And this joy is called *the gladness of his heart*, to shew the reality of it; Christ (in a manner) can enjoy no such satisfying thing as a marriage with a poor sinner, then *he sees the travel of his soul and is satisfied*, *Isa. 53. 11.* that cheers him and makes him smile (if I may say so) and this looks to that glory which shines in Christ, and is expressed by him when he is well satisfied with poor sinners, and that is mainly when he gets welcome by them. This signifies not joy in Christ, as it is in us; but, 1. It shews how acceptable a sinner's believing in him, is to him. 2. What confident welcome they may expect from him, when they come unto him. 3. How kindly he useth them, by manifesting himself to be well pleased, as one that is cheerful doth on his marriage-day to his bride.

*Thirdly*, The duty prest upon the daughters is in two words, holding forth two duties, the one whereof is the mids or mean to the other, and the other the end of this. The first is, *Behold*, which points at the great scope and thing

thing called for ; and it imports, 1. A wonderful Object ; and indeed Christ is so, being considered in his most royal posture, as a crowned King upon his coronation-day ; and in his most loving posture, as a beautiful Bridegroom on his marriage-day. 2. It imports a dulness in the daughters, needing upstirring to take up Christ in this lovely and glorious posture. 3. A difficulty rightly to take him up under this consideration, yet a necessity of it, and that it be done with attention. 4. It implies an intenseness or bensil of spirit in the act of beholding ; so rare an object calls for greatest intention of heart, and gravest consideration of mind in the beholder. It is not every look or glance of the eyes that will discern it ; but, (1.) There must be attentiveness and steadiness, a stayed looking, and as it were dwelling on the object with their eye. (2.) The exercise of faith must go alongst with this their looking, reading his worth by faith exercised on him, as *Isa. 45. 19. Look unto me, and be ye saved* ; beholding of him, as the stung *Israelites* did the brazen serpent. (3.) Also the exercise of love ; an affectionate look is here necessary, delighting in him, and being taken up with him, as one with that wherein they take pleasure : the eye of the seer, here, cannot but affect and inflame the heart. (4.) This looking is attended with wondring at this glorious Object, as one beholding a wonder, and ravished with the admirableness of it : All these are comprehended under this expression, *Behold him*. The second word (which hath in it another piece of their duty) is, *Go forth* ; and this is a help to the other : And, beside what hath been hinted at in the former expression, it shews, it is not in every posture that they will take up Christ thus ; but there is a necessity they must come out from under the natural condition they were into : We take it to be the same with that precept, *Psal. 45. 10, 11. Forget thine own people and thy father's house, so (and no otherwise) shall the King greatly desire thy beauty*. Christ manifests not himself, as reconciled and pleased, till former lovers be given up with ; and this *beholding* of his smiling and glorious countenance cannot be obtained till then, even as one sitting in the house cannot discern a stately sight going by, except they go forth : Thus the similitude is borrowed, to shew a necessity of rousing of affections within, but not to signify any local mutation. This then is the sense and scope, *O professors* (saith the Bride) *would ye see a stately sight ? then get up, and set your selves to take up Christ, more glorious than Solomon either on his coronation or marriage-day* (to which there is an allusion here) And because few sees great comeliness and beauty in Christ, why he should be desired ; therefore she adds what a sight it is she understands : *Endeavour* (saith she) *to behold him as he is discernable to believers, when they close with him, and accept of him ; if so ye will exercise faith in him, so as ye may perfect espousals with him, and satisfy him by resting on him,*  
ye

ye will then have a stately and soul-ravishing object to look upon ; otherwise Christ is not alway, and to every one, pleasant and cheerful company.

*Obs.* 1. Christ, when rightly conceived and taken up, is a most ravishing satisfying sight, and a most glorious stately person to look upon. 2. Though Christ Jesus be so stately a person, yet he condescends to espouse and marry himself to the believer : Thus Christ by faith becomes theirs. 3. This marrying hath its day, and men are not born espoused to Christ, but by their accepting of him, their espousals with him are consummate. 4. Christ is never taken up aright but by the believer ; nor doth his glory ever appear as it is, but to the believer : others, that are not spiritual, cannot discern it. 5. Christ's condescending to marry sinners, and accept of them, is as the crown and diadem of his glory ; and that which makes him most singularly admirable, is, that he is *full of grace and truth*, John 1. 18. 6. Christ accounts believing on him by a poor sinner, a singular piece of honour done unto him ; it is as the putting of a crown on his head, when they make use of his grace : as he accounts it the greatest dishonour can be done to him, to refuse and slight him ; and therefore misbelief (when Christ calls) is a most hainous sin, it is as it were the taking of Christ's crown from him. 7. There is no such pleasure that a sinner can do to Christ, as to believe on him : and Christ is ever cheerful then, when sinners are thronging on him by faith, and he is never discontent with that ; for, that is the *day of the gladness of his heart*, as other days in the Church are sad, when this design of his is (as it were) obstructed and disappointed. 8. Usually the sight and sense of Christ's grace are most fresh and sensible to the soul, about the time of their closing with Christ, or of their being clear that they have closed with him. 9. Every lazy looking on Christ, or wishing for him, will not be acceptable to him, nor solidly comfort a sinner ; but there must be a *going forth*, and a *beholding of him*. 10. This being spoken to the daughters of Zion, faith, many may have much of a profession and a name, yea, they may have a kind of high esteem of gracious people, as the daughters had, *verse 6.* and yet be such as have not rightly taken up Christ, but are exceeding ignorant of him, as these are, *chap. 5. 9.* 11. Considering these words as spoken by the Bride, who was so much commended, *verse 6.* we may observe, that no particular esteem or commendation will satisfy a sincere believer, so long as Christ gets not his due : His honour will still be nearer them than their own.

## C H A P. IV.

## CHRIST.

Verse 1. Behold, thou art fair, my love, behold, thou art fair, thou hast doves eyes within thy locks : thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from mount Gilead.

**T**hat these are Christ's words, spoken to the Bride, is at the first clear : He continues speaking from the beginning unto *verse* 16. and then, *verse* 16. the Bride speaks by prayer to him, for the influences and breathings of the Spirit.

In Christ's speech there are two parts ; the first to the 8th verse, wherein he gives both a general and particular commendation of the Bride. The second, from that forward to the last verse, wherein he begins with a sweet invitation, and then shews how he was affected towards her, and so breaks out in another commendation of her. The matter in both is sweet and comfortable ; wonderful to be spoken by such a one as Christ, of such a one as a believer : but there is nothing in his love, but what is wonderful and like himself. The scope of the first part of Christ's speech is twofold, *First*, More general, to intimate his love to his Bride, on the back of so much darkness, *chap.* 3. 1, 2. (in the midst of which, notwithstanding, her love did appear in her commending him) and it is subjoined to the commendation that she gives of him to others, in the preceeding chapter, to shew, *1st*, That when believers slight their own esteem, to have it accrescing to Christ's commendation, it is never loss, but gain to them ; for here Christ comes in to commend her himself, whereas it was but the daughters of Jerusalem who commended her, *chap.* 3. 6. *2dly*, It shews, that time taken, and pains bestowed for the edification of others, and their instruction in the excellency of Christ, is acceptable to him, and proves often useful for attaining sensible fellowship with him ; yea, it proves often to be some way as useful in reference to this as their own particular praying for themselves, the Lord doth so return their pains taken this way in their bosom. That to commend the Bride is the scope in general, is clear from *verse* 7.

More particularly we take the scope to be, his giving her an answer to her prayer, *chap.* 2. 17. where she prayed for his fellowship *until the day break, &c.* Here he doth not only materially answer, but, *verse* 6. formally repeats her words, that she may know what he speaks is a direct answer to her prayer : *Until that day come* (saith he) it shall be so as thou desires (as the words will make it clear) Shewing, *1st*, That a believer's prayers may for a time ly be-

side Christ (as it were) and yet he not forget a word of them, but mind well the answer and performance of them. 2dly, That sometimes he will not only give what is sought by his people, but make them know that he respects their prayer in the giving of it ; and so he not only hears their prayers, but lets them know he hath heard them.

This commendation, whereby he intimates his respect to her, hath four steps. First, It is done in general, *verse* 1. Then, 2dly, He insists on particulars, from *verse* 1. to *verse* 6. 3dly, He shews how his respect to her affected him, *verse* 6. 4thly, He sums all particulars up in an universal commendation, *verse* 7. lest any thing should be missed, or, being left out, might vex her ; whereby he shews what was his scope in that which preceeded.

The general commendation, in the beginning of *verse* 1. is the same that was given her, *chap.* 1. 15. yet here it is repeated with the two *beholds* : The reasons why he repeats it, are, 1. That Christ might evidence to her the reality of his love, and that he varies not, nor changes in it, even tho' fits of security on her side had interveened, *chap.* 3. 1. Christ's love and thoughts to his people are still the same, whatever changes be upon their frame and way, which may occasion sad changes in his dispensations towards them. 2. That she might the more be perswaded of his love to her, and esteem of her : Christ would have his own thoroughly perswaded that he loves them, 1 *John* 4. 16. and would have others to know that he respects them, more than the most mighty in the world. 3. It is because often believers, from all other hands, whether the men of the world, or from themselves, have but little comfort ; therefore Christ renews his intimations to support and comfort them : Believer's consolation hangs most on his kindness to them, and they who depend most on it are no losers. And further, we may here observe, that even a believer, especially after sad challenges, will need renewed intimations of Christ's love.

The more particular explication and commendation of her parts follows ; where we would advert, 1. That bodily members or parts are not to be here looked unto, but believers have an inner-man, as well as an outward, a new man as well as an old ; and so that inner-man hath, as it were, distinct parts and members, as the natural body hath, which act in reference thereto, with some analogy to these members in the natural body. 2. As the new or inner-man sets forth the new nature and habitual grace in the believer ; so the particular parts, eyes, lips, &c. signifie distinct graces of faith, love, &c. which are parts of that new nature. 3. These parts may be looked on as useful in the new man, as the external members are in the body, or as they are evidences of something in the renewed disposition. 4. They set forth the disposition as they are qualified in the commendation, and not simply.

ply. 5. Although we cannot fatisfie our own or others curiofity, in the particular application of thefe parts, yet there is a particular meaning of every feveral part here attributed to her, as well as of every part attributed to him, *chap. 5. 11, 12, &c.* and he giveth no idle words, nor ufeth any vain repetitions: We would therefore beware of thinking all this needlefs, feeing he knoweth beft what is needful. 6. Being clear of the fcope, that it is to commend graces, and to evidence the beauty of her feveral graces, we muft regulate all the application by that fcope; and what is fubfervient thereto, cannot be impertinent. Yet, 7. There is much need of fobriety here; therefore, we fhall be fhort and not peremptory in particular applications. 8. There being a connexion amongst all the graces of the Spirit, it muft not be thought abfurd that fome of thefe graces be fignified twice in different refpects, and that one part refpect moe graces (which are nearly linked) efpecially when the commendation gives ground to infer it. 9. We take this commendation to fet forth efpecially the invifible Church, or true believers, which are the members thereof, as the fcope and application do clear.

If it be asked, why he infifts on particulars in this commendation? I answer, for thefe reafons, 1. That he may fhew, that whoever hath the new nature, and a lively work of grace, hath alfo particular graces in exercife. 2. That it may be known that the new nature is not a dead body, but a living; and exercifeth itfelf by putting forth thefe particular graces in exercife. 3. That he may fhew, that where ever one grace is, all are there, and as it is ordinarily with one grace, fo it is with all; where believers are in a good and commendable cafe, it will not be one grace or two that will be in exercife, or one duty or two in which thefe graces are exercifed, but it will be univerfally, all graces, and in all known duties. 4. To fhew who may expect Chrift's commendation; thefe who have a refpect to all his commands, and make confcience to exercife all graces. 5. To fhew what particular notice he takes of believers graces: he can tell how it is with every one of them; and takes this exact notice of them, becaufe it is very acceptable to him, when he finds them in good cafe.

There are feven parts particularly mentioned, every one having it is own diftinct commendation. The firft two of them are in the reft of *verfe. 1.* The firft thing commended is her eyes, which here have a twofold commendation. 1<sup>ft</sup>, That they are as *doves eyes*. 2. That they are *within her locks*. Eyes are the organs of feeing in the natural body, whereby we difcern objects that are vifible; and fo our underftandings are thereby fet forth in fcripture; That *the eyes of your underftanding may be inlightned*, faith the Apoftle, *Eph. 1. 18.* By eyes alfo the affections are fet forth, becaufe the affection fets the eye on the work to look here or there, (Hence is the phrafe of a *single and evil*

eye, *Matth. 6. 21, 23.*) and because it is some way the seat of these, and somewhat of love or hatred will be, and may be gathered from the eye. Here we understand, 1. A spiritual, sanctified and inlightned understanding in the things of God, taking up Christ and spiritual things *spiritually*, *1 Cor. 2. 15.* that is, by faith, it being *the evidence of things not seen*, *Heb. 11. 1.* And therefore *looking* is frequently put for believing in scripture, which presupposeth understanding. 2. Kindliness, or a spiritual, kindly and affectionate carriage to Christ; in a word, it is the exercise of love upon this spiritual and wonderfully excellent object *Christ*, a having *respect to him*, as it is, *Isa. 17. 7.* his eyes shall have *respect to his Maker*; it is such an uptaking of Christ and spiritual things, as works love and delight in them.

The commendation will confirm this, which is twofold, 1<sup>st</sup>, They are *doves eyes*: This was opened, *Chap. 1. 15.* and it signifieth, 1. What is the great object they behold, and are taken up with, it is *Christ*; and they are chaste to him, and seek to *know* no other at all but him, *1 Cor. 2. 2.* 2. It imports, that the act of faith, whereby they behold him, is simple, single and sweet; their understanding is not subtil, nor politick, nor are they puffed up with it, but it is taken up in studying Christ and him crucified, opposite to the vain wisdom of the world, *1 Cor. 2. 1, 2.* 2<sup>dly</sup>, These eyes are *within her locks*: Locks are that part of the hair that hang about the face, handsomly knit, and was then in stead of a vail to women, *1 Cor. 11. 7.* and so the word in the *Hebrew* will bear; and it is differenced from that word translated *hair*, in the words following, which is that part of the hair that covers the head: It implies here, that the believers knowledge is not used for frothy ostentation (as the knowledge that puffs up) but is kept within it is right bounds, and that they are wise unto sobriety, and that their knowledge is not at the first obvious, but seasonably vents it self and looks out, as eyes that are within the locks.

These things are sure, and may be observed from the words, 1. That a believer should be filled with spiritual knowledge and understanding. 2. Knowledge is no less necessary to a believer, that he may go right in the way of God, and not err, than eyes are to guide a man in a journey; and this necessity extends both to faith and practice. 3. A believer without knowledge, or weak in knowledge, is very far defective in spiritual beauty; he is as a man without eyes, it is not decent that a believer should be so: from this it is, that many are called weak in faith. 4. That knowledge of spiritual things should ever have faith, love and singleness going alongst in the exercise thereof; for every knowledge will not be commendable to Christ, more than every eye will be useful in a body: Believers eyes must be as *doves eyes*. 5. A believer's eyes, or knowledge, is different from the knowledge of all others, (1.) In respect

respect of its object, which is Christ and spiritual things. (2.) In that it is joined with love, it respects him. (3.) In that it is chaste, keeping the soul for him alone. (4.) It works delight in him. (5.) It is denied to other things. *Obs.* 6. Often the most subtil in worldly wisdom knows least of Christ truly; whereas the most simple, that have *doves eyes*, take up most of him. 7. Christ respects not how much a man knows, but how he is affected with it: It is not the *eagles*, but the *doves eyes*, which he commends. 8. It is good to know, and to think little of our knowledge, and not to be puffed up with it. 9. Christ loves it well, when his people seasonably use and improve their knowledge and parts; then the new man becomes lovely, as the *eyes* are within the *locks*. 10. There are extremes in the use-making of knowledge, which are to be shunned; we would neither altogether obscure it that it be not seen, nor by ostentation make shew of it: It is good when it runs in the right mids, then it gets the commendation, and is as *eyes within the locks*.

The *second* thing commended is her *hair*, having a twofold commendation also. The hair is no integral or essential part of the body (to say so) yet in all ages a great part of mens decoring hath ever been placed in it: It is the most conspicuous thing of the body, being highest and most discernable, especially in the way it used to be dressed; and this conspicuousness of it, by the commendation, seems mainly to be aimed at. By hair we understand the ornament of a christian, godly, and sober walk, having the right principles of saving grace within, and the fruits thereof in a well ordered conversation, and suitable profession appearing without in the practice. We take it so, not only because it is a main piece of a Christian's or believer's beauty, but also for these reasons, 1. Because as hair sets out and adorns the natural body, tho' it be no substantial part thereof; so a well ordered conversation commends grace within, and makes it lovely. 2. Because as hair is upmost and most conspicuous, and therefore seen when the natural body is hid (therefore it was to women a cover, 1 Cor. 11. 5.) so a suitable practical profession is (as it were) the cover of holiness, through which it shines, and by which it is conspicuous, which otherwise would not be discernable. 3. And especially, because in scripture this adorning with good works, and with a meek and quiet spirit, is put in the place of decking of the hair, and other external decorements, 1 Tim. 2. 9, 10. and as that wherein Christians beauty should shine before men, Matth. 5. 17. and which should be to a believer, as decking of the hair is to these who take pains to adorn the body. For sure these do make them beautiful before God and men, more than hair and its decorements can make any person in the world appear beautiful to the men thereof, 1 Tim. 2. 9, 10. whose adorning (saith the Apostle, speaking of believing women) *let it not be in costly apparel, broidered hair, &c. but* (what then should be in the place there.

thereof?) *shamefastness, sobriety, and good works*: So, 1 Pet. 3. 3, 4, 5. *Whose adorning let it not be the plating of the hair, but, in the place thereof, let it be a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.* And this is also mentioned by the Apostle, as that which is exceedingly engaging to the husband, for which *Sarah* there is commended. Next, the commendation of her hair, in both its parts, will confirm this, *First*, It is like a flock of goats: Goats are stately and comely in going, and a flock of them must be very stately, as they were especially in these parts, *Prov.* 30. 31. And so this ornament of a good conversation is an amiable, gaining and alluring thing; by it, faith *Peter*, the husband's affection may be won (and that both to Christ and to his wife in the Lord) more than by any outward decoring; and this puts them to glorify God, when it shines before them, *Matth.* 5. 16. *2dly*, It is commended from this, that it is like a flock appearing from mount Gilead: This was a fruitful place, and it is like the goats that fed thereon were more excellent than others in their beauty; and, being seen afar, and discernable ere men came near them, were pleasant and stately to beholders: And so good works, showing forth themselves in a well-ordered conversation, do also as from a mountain appear to others, and sets believers up as *lights shining a dark place*, *Philip.* 1. 15. and also makes them lovely and desirable in the consciences of on-lookers and beholders. Observe then, 1. That practice should wait upon knowledge; for it is the end thereof, and without it all mens knowledge is void and vain. 2. Grace and holiness appearing in a Christian's practice, will shine, and be in some measure very discernable. 3. This is a thing that makes the believer's conversation very beautiful and lovely. 4. It is not enough that believers be tender and conscientious in secret before God; but there ought to be a shining, even in their outward conversation before men. 5. This doth exceedingly adorn a believer's walk, and make it stately to beholders, when the fruits of holiness visibly appear in his conversation.

**Verse 2.** *Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep, that are even shorn, which came up from the washing: whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.*

The third particular commended, is, *verse 2.* and it is her teeth, which have a fourfold commendation given them. The teeth, properly taken, are useful for furthering the nourishment of the body, they being the instruments that fit meat for digestion; and what comeliness is in them, is not every way obvious: they are not seen or discerned in their proportionableness or disproportionableness, but by the motion of the lips, otherwise they are hid by them. *2dly*, Again in scripture they are used to evidence and signifie these  
three

three things, 1. They are used to signify the nature and disposition of a person, as good or evil: Hence evil men are said to have *lions teeth*, and that their *teeth are as spears*, Psal. 57. 4. and that beast, Dan. 7. 5, 7. is said to have *three ribs in his teeth*, pointing out its cruel disposition. 2. They evidence good or ill food that the person feeds on. 3. A healthful or unhealthy complexion, which depends much on the former: Hence Judah's good portion and healthfulness is set out by this, Gen. 49. 12. *His teeth shall be white with milk*. According to the first, by *teeth* in the new man may be understood two things, *First*, Faith, believing being often compared to eating, because it furthers the soul's nourishment, and is the mean by which the soul lives on its spiritual food. This faith, 1. That the inner man must have food, as the natural body hath, for its sustaining. 2. That the believer actually eats, and makes use of that food; he hath teeth for that end, and should not only look on Christ, but feed on him. *Secondly*, Meditation also may be here understood, that serving much to the feeding and filling of the soul, as Psal. 63. 6, 7. *My soul shall be filled as with marrow and fatness; How? While I meditate on thee on my bed, and think of thee in the night-watches*. Meditation is as it were the soul's ruminating and chewing its cude, feeding upon, and digesting what is understood and eaten, as the clean beasts did; which may be one reason why her teeth are, in the first part of their commendation, compared to a *flock of sheep*, which were among the number of clean beasts by reason of this property: Meditation is exceedingly useful for a believer's life; and they who are strangers to it, are not like Christ's sheep.

Again, as the teeth evidence first the nature and inward disposition, so we conceive they are also made use of here (as the commendation also clears) to shew, 1. The zealous nature which is, and ought to be in believers; they have teeth, and ought not alway to be soft, when the Lord's honour is concerned. Zeal, tho' it bite not, and devour not, yet it is not senseless, but easily touched with the feeling of that which reflects upon the glory of God. 2. The similitude here is to shew what a meek and quiet spirit believers have: they have not such teeth as lions or tygers, but such as sheep have; nor tusks like dogs and ravenous beasts, but *even shorn*, shewing moderation and equitableness in their way, being *first pure, then peaceable, gentle, &c.* James 3. 17. This will agree well to *teeth*, as they appear by opening the lips; for, the new nature within is expressed and doth appear in words, which afterward are spoken of under the similitude of *lips*. Now, this christian moderation, which keeps the right midst, is a notable piece of spiritual beauty, as is clear from the second piece of the commendation; for it is *as a flock of sheep even shorn*, and not unequally and unhandsofly clipped: So true zeal will not upon by-respect or interest be high or low, up or down, but keeps a just equality in  
its

its way; and this speaks out a well constituted frame, that is, neither too soft, nor too sharp, in *biting* and *devouring* one another (as is said, *Gal. 5. 15.*) which carnal zeal sets the teeth a work to do.

*Secondly*, This similitude doth evidence and signify a good subject they feed on, to wit, *Christ* and his promises; and a good subject they meditate on, the same *Christ*, and what is most precious in him: Hence, in the third part of the commendation, they are likened to *sheep coming up from the washing*, white and clean: Neither mixture of humane inventions, nor of carnal passions or worldly delights, gets place and entertainment with them; their zeal is pure, their ends are single, their affections are chaste and clean, being *purged from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, and they appear so.

*Thirdly*, Not only their healthfulness is hereby evidenced, but further also their fruitfulness; whereupon their inward meekness and zeal, moderated by pure and peaceable wisdom, have great influence; as is clear by the fourth part of their commendation, *every one of these sheep bear twins, and none is barren amongst them*: The scope whereof is to shew their abundant fruitfulness; thus their sweet nature is a pleasant possession, like a flock of sheep that enriches their owner, they are so fruitful and profitable. *Obs.* 1. Feeding on *Christ* is ever fruitful to the soul that makes him its food; whereas other meats *profit not them that are occupied therein*, *Heb. 13. 9.* 2. Zeal, moderated with meekness, hath also a deal of fruits waiting on it, *Jam. 3. 17.* but bitter zeal (as it is there in the Original) or *strife*, hath *confusion*, and every evil work following on it, *Ibid. ver. 14, 15, 16.* It is much to be zealous always in a good thing, and no little piece of a spiritual commendation, to keep the right midst with our zeal.

**Verse 3.** *Thy lips are like a threed of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.*

In this 3d verse we have the fourth and fifth particulars that are commended in the Bride. The fourth thing commended is her *lips*: The commendation given them is, that they are like a *threed of scarlet*, that is, neat and lovely, and of an excellent colour, as scarlet, which, being of the richest dye, was made use of under the law to represent the blood of *Christ*, as *Heb. 9. 19.* Next, this is amplified, as we conceive, in the following expression (*and thy speech is comely*) which is added for the explication of the former, and therefore is joined thereto with a copulative (*and*) which is added to none of the other parts here commended; and it may be here added, to shew, 1st, A way of opening the other expression; for, speech is expressed by *lips*, because they are the organs (to say so) whereby it is formed and uttered. And, 2dly,

2dly, To shew, that under lips comes in both our words to God in prayer and praise, and also our words to others, whatever is spoken or comes out of the lips, as often the phrase is used for both. Also it shews, that in a special way he takes notice of believers speech, when it is savoury, as a main part of their spiritual beauty, which makes them lovely.

The commendation of her lips and speech is twofold, *First*, More general, it is like a *thread of scarlet*; 2dly, That is expounded by another expression more clear and particular, namely this, that her *speech is comely*. The meaning of both which may be comprehended under these four, 1. That her speech is profitable for its matter, as a scarlet thread is precious and useful: The subject of a believer's discourse is not common, but good to the use of edifying, Eph. 4. 29. 2. It is pleasant and delightful for its manner, like a sweet, comely and pleasant voice, opposite to some kind of voices that are harsh and unpleasant: It is by prudence and love sweetened and made savoury, and therefore is said in scripture to be *seasoned with salt*, Col. 4. 6. and to *minister grace to the hearers*, Eph. 4. 29. and it is called a *giving of thanks*, Eph. 5. 4. 3. It is articulate and distinct, therefore called *speech*, and not a sound, having honest ingenuity in it, speaking as they think in their heart, Psal. 15. 2. and opposite to lying, dissembling, &c. whereby one speaks to veil or hide his mind from another. 4. Hereby is also signified, that they hazard not even the best of their prayers on their own bottom and worth; but their work is to have them all dyed in the blood of the Lamb, and to put them up in his Name, Heb. 13. 15. they are all offered up by him. Now these are special qualifications, commendations and characters of a believer; shewing, (1.) That a believer, as a believer, is not dumb, but hath renewed lips, whereby he can speak to God in praise for his honour, in prayers for his own good, and also to others for their edification: A believer that can speak nothing to a good purpose, or if he can, doth it not, is not like Christ's Bride; much less these whose discourses tend quite another way. (2.) That words are in an especial way taken notice of by Christ, and are special evidences of the frame of the heart, according to which we may expect commendation or reproof from Christ; for by *our words we shall be justified or condemned*, Matth. 12. 37. (3.) That there is nothing more commendable in itself, beautiful in a believer, or acceptable to Christ, than the well ordering of the words: He who can *rule the tongue*, is a *perfect man*, Jam. 3. 2. (4.) That believers prayers are all dyed in Christ's blood, and put up in his Name: And we conceive prayer, or the believer's speech to God, is especially here understood; partly, because prayer gets this same commendation to be sweet and comely, Chap. 2. 14. and partly, because mutual communication in words among believers, is expressed afterward more clearly, *verse. 11.* though it is not to be excluded here.

The *fifth* part of her commendation (or the fifth character or property of the Bride) is in these words, *Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.* The temples are that part of the face, that are betwixt the ears and the eyes; and sometimes the signification is so large, as they take in the cheeks; they are a special part, wherein the beauty of the face consists, and are the proper seat of shamefastness and modesty, wherein blushing appears. The commendation is twofold, 1. They are like a piece of a pomegranate: They who write of it say, it is a fruit, which when broken (as here the mentioning of a piece thereof signifies) is pleasant with red and white spots, not unlike blushing in a pleasant face. The second commendation is, that these temples are *within her locks*, of the colour of a pomegranate, but not discernable fully (as the eyes also were, *verse 1.*) yet something observable; As sometimes modesty will make blushing, and again will seek to cover it, when hardly will it be gotten done. Here we take tenderness, shamefastness, modesty in spiritual things, and blushing before God, to be understood: Christ's Bride hath a tenderness that is soon affected with wrongs done to him, she easily repents them; and this is opposite to affrontedness and a whore's fore-head, which cannot be ashamed, than which nothing is more displeasing to Christ, and unbecoming to his Bride. Here the temples are not hard, (as the brow that is of brass) but like a piece of a pomegranate, opposite to it; here it is not stretched out impudently, but covered within the locks, and not shameless and affronted that cannot blush, but coloured (to say so) with shamefastness and blushing, which though they seek to hide, yet it appears in them. And this application being safe in it self, and agreeable to the scope (which shews what Christ is delighted with in her) and this being a main piece of her beauty, and also suitable to the commendation, there is no hazard to fix on it; for, without this she would not be so lovely. Now we may easily conceive, that this tenderness, modesty or blushing, is not any natural indowment, which appears in the carriage of man to man; but it is a saving grace, which especially is to be found in believers carriage before Christ, as being their Lord and Husband: and it evidenceth it self in believers, in these, or the like steps, 1. In their being soon challenged for any thing that looks like sin. 2. In their being affected easily with challenges, and with the infirmities that are in them. 3. In their thinking shame of them, as of things that are disgraceful. 4. In their not being tenacious of them or of their own will, nor disputing with Christ in any thing, but passing easily from their compearance, as it were, and thinking shame to be taken in any sin, or to be found in mistakes with him. 5. In being sparing to speak of any thing that tends to commend themselves, or in seeking their own glory. These are commendable things in a believer, and makes him look like the piece of a pomegranate spotted

spotted with red and white : And it shews the result of a believer's looking on their own way, when they take it up, and see that wrong, and this right, and even that which is right, wrong in so many things, and so many ways ; whereupon as there is ever some sincerity, so there is ever some shame, and holy blushing ; and this is constant, and (as it were) native to them, still to blush when they look upon themselves.

2dly, This commendation, that her temples are *within her locks*, imports, that Christ's Bride blushes when none sees, and for that which no other sees : And also, that she seeks not to publish her exercises, but modestly covers them ; yet the evidences of all these in a tender walk appear and are comely. *Obj.* 1. Shamefastness or sobriety becomes a believer or Christ's Bride exceeding well, 2 *Tim.* 2. 9. 2. Inward heart-blushing, when we look upon our selves before God, is the best trial of true tenderness. 3. A believer will have many shameful representations of himself, and will think much shame of what he sees, which the world will never be acquainted with. 4. This grace of self-loathing and holy blushing is much taken notice of by Christ, and most especially recorded by him, however it be much hid from others.

Verse 4. *Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armory, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.*

The *sixth* thing commended in the Bride, is her *neck* : The neck, being comely and straight, adds much to the beauty of a person, and is placed by nature, as a more eminent and essential part of the body than the eyes, legs, lips, &c. or any other part here mentioned ; for it is that whereby the head and body are joined together. The commendation thereof is, that it is *like the tower of David* : What particular place this hath reference unto, it is hard to say ; possibly it is that mentioned, *Neh.* 3. 16, 19, 25. called the *tower of the mighty*, or the *armory* : It is like, that some strong hold built by *David*, eminent for beauty and strength, is hereby signified, which might have been employed for keeping of arms, for times of danger ; as the words following seem to bear.

2dly, This tower is more particularly explicate, 1. From the end and use for which it was intended ; It was *built for an armory*, that men might be furnished with arms in time of need. 2. The store of arms there laid up, is here set down, *whereupon hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men* ; that is, It is furnished especially with defensive arms (the believer's war being most defensive) as shields ; but with abundance of these, for number a *thousand* ; and so for quality excellent, and such as *mighty men* make use of.

If we consider the neck here, in respect of its use, it holds forth the vigorous exercise of the grace of faith; for it is that by which a believer is united to Christ the head: It is that which strengthens them, and is their armory furnishing them with shields, because it provides them out of Christ's fulness, which is contained in the promises; which promises, or rather Christ in them, being made use of by faith, are for a believer's security against challenges, tentations, discouragements, &c. as so many excellent shields: Therefore, *Eph. 6. 16.* it is called *the shield of faith*, and for their safety it is commended above all the rest of the spiritual armour: And this being the believer's great defence, and especially tending to their commendation when it is in lively exercise, this similitude cannot be so well applied to any other thing.

*Obs.* 1. Faith in exercise is a notable defence to a believer, against all assaults and temptations; there is no such shield as faith is: every promise, and every attribute in God, is as a shield to these that exercise this grace of faith thereupon. 2. Faith, exercised on these, is exceedingly well pleasing to Jesus Christ. 3. That all believers have their arms out of one armory; there is but one store-house for them all, to wit, faith acting on Christ's fulness. 4. Faith will never want a buckler, there is a *thousand* laid up in a magazine for the believer's use. 5. He is the most *mighty* and valiant man, who is most in the exercise and use-making of faith. 6. Faith is the grace that makes a man valiant and victorious, as all the *cloud of witnesses*, *Heb. 11.* proves.

Again, if we consider the neck, as it is commended here, as being like a tower for uprightness and straightness; it signifies a quiet, serene mind, and a confident boldness in doing and suffering; in which sense, it is opposite to hanging of the head, which speaks discouragement: And as a stretched out neck, in a carnal sense, *Nat. 3. 16.* signifies haughtiness and pride; so here, in a holy and spiritual sense, it implies cheerfulness of heart, and confident holy boldness, which proceeds from the Spirit of adoption; and this waits upon, and follows after the exercise of faith, being fixed and stayed upon the Lord and his word against all events, *Psal. 112. 6.* Bold in duties, and valorous in sufferings, and in undergoing any difficulties. So then this is no small commendation which Christ gives his Bride, and it is well consistent with that holy blushing, shamefastness and sobriety, for which she was commended in the former verse.

**Verse 5.** *Thy breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.*

The seventh and last part that is commended in the Bride, is here *two breasts* or paps. For clearing of this similitude, we are to consider, 1. That the breasts

breasts in nature are a part of the comeliness of the body, *Ezek. 16. 7.* 2. They are useful to give suck and food to others. 3. They signifie warmth of affection, and lovingness, as *Prov. 5. 19.* *Let her breasts always satisfie thee;* and *chap. 1. 13.* the Bride expressing her affection to Christ, saith, *he shall lie all night between my breasts;* and so the wife of the bosom is the chaste and beloved spouse: And thus Christ is called the Son of God's love, or of his bosom. For this cause, we conceive, these things are here understood, *First*, A believer's fitness to edify others, and that believers are in a condition suitable to a married wife or mother, that brings forth children, and hath breasts to nurse them: And so to have *no breasts*, *chap. 8. 8.* is opposed to this; a believer is, as it were, a nurse with breasts, fitted to edifie others. *2dly*, That believers being in case to be useful to others for their edification, is a special ornament to their profession. And the *third* thing that is here understood, is believers warmth and kindliness to Christ, and these that are his, taking him and them (as it were) in their bosom; the believer hath warm affections to receive them into. And *two* breasts are mentioned, to shew there is no defect as to the extent, but both her breasts are in good case, and always ready in love to communicate their furniture, for others edification.

The commendation is in two steps, each whereof is qualified for the further enlarging of the commendation. The *first* is, They are like *two roes*, that are lovely and kindly, *Prov. 5. 17.* (often mentioned before) and like *young roes*, because these are most lovely, and suit best to be a similitude to set forth the comeliness of that part of the body: They are like young roes, not too big; for, when breasts are too big, it is a deformity: And so, when private edification exceeds its true bounds, it is not approvable or lovely. And these roes, to which her breasts are compared, are *twins*: Which shews an equality and proportionableness in their love to God and to others, giving each of these their own place, and keeping their love to creatures in the right subordination; and also their communicating their love to others, in admonitions and rebukes, &c. equally, keeping a proportionableness in all.

The *second* part of the commendation is, They feed among the lilies: As roes would not maintain their pleasantness long, if they did not feed, yea, if the pasture were not good; so these must needs be pleasant and useful, because they feed, and that not in a wilderness, but amongst the lilies. Which shews, that believers, in sitting and furnishing themselves, that they may be forthcoming for others edification, do not neglect their own advantage and edification, but feed on good pasture, whereby they are yet more fitted for being useful to others.

By feeding, in this Song, is understood, *First*, To be present in such a place, as *chap. 2. 16.* *Secondly*, To make use of that which is food for the entertaining of

of life. *Thirdly*, To delight in a thing for satisfying of the affections. *Next*, By the Bride's breasts (being like roes that feed amongst the lilies) three things may be understood. 1<sup>st</sup>, As this expression respects Christ's feeding (so to speak) for he is said to feed amongst the lilies, chap. 2. 16. and so it says, That the believer loves to feed in Christ's company, and where he is. And, 2. That this makes believers breasts run to others, when they are much with him, and in his company. 2<sup>dly</sup>, As it respects believers, who are called lilies, chap. 2. 16. and 6. 2. And so it says, 1. That all believers have one pasture: they feed together as a flock doth. 2. That one believer loves and delights in the company of another; they are the excellent and the lilies of the earth, their delight is with them. And, 3. That this helps a believer's growth, and fits him to be useful for others edification, and to improve well the spiritual fellowship of other believers. 3<sup>dly</sup>, As it respects Christ himself, who is called a lily, chap. 2. 1. and his lips are said to be like lilies dropping, &c. chap. 5. 13. Whereby is holden out his word, promises, ordinances, &c. And so it says, 1. That Christ and his word is the great and main food upon which believers feed, that is their proper pasture; to be much drinking-in the sincere milk of the word is their meat and drink. 2. That much acquaintance with Christ in the word, enables one for being very useful to others. In sum, it says, (1.) That a believer is no bare novice, but hath breasts that yields milk and nourishment to others. (2.) That a believer hath a good pasture to feed on. (3.) That believers breasts run to others, according as they feed themselves: If they hunger themselves, others will not be edified by them; if they feed on wind and empty notions themselves, it will be no healthful food that others will receive from them. (4.) That it is a pleasant thing and acceptable to Christ, when a believer so communicates what he hath received to others, as he is still feeding on Christ himself, and not living on the stock he hath already received.

**Verse 6.** *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrhe, and to the hill of frankincense.*

The words in this sixth verse express the second way, how Christ evidenceth his respect to his Bride; he is so affected with her beauty, that he tells her, he cannot but haunt her company, and answer her prayers: For, comparing this verse with *verse 17. chap. 2.* we find it a clear answer of her petition she puts up there. The words contain, 1. A promise. 2. A term set to the performance of it, shewing the continuance of his performance. The promise is, *I will get me to the mountain of myrrhe, and to the hill of frankincense*: By this, in general, is understood no withdrawing of Christ's, or shut-

shutting of himself up in heaven from her ; for, that will not agree to the scope, which is to shew how he loves her, and comforts her ; nor will that be an answer of her prayer, but the contrary : It must then hold forth some comfortable act of Christ's, evidencing his respect to her, for her consolation ; which we conceive to be a promise of his presence with her to the end of the world. By *mountain* is often understood the Church (as *Isa.* 2. 1. and *Mic.* 4. 1.) called so for her endurance and stability ; for typifying of which, the temple was built on mount *Moriah*. And it is called a *mountain of myrrhe, and hill of frankincense*, to difference this one mountain (which is in the singular) from the mountains or excellencies in the world, after-mentioned, *verse* 8. which are many : It is a sweet mountain, not of *leopards*, but of *myrrhe* and *frankincense* ; these were spices much used in the ceremonial services, *Exod.* 30. 23, 24. and signified the preciousness and favouriness of the graces of God's people, and of their prayers, *Psal.* 141. 2. *Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense*, &c. Here then is understood that place of the world (namely the Church) where the graces of God's people flow, and their prayers (as acceptable sacrifices) are put up to him ; and so it answers the scope, and is opposed to the mountains of the world, mentioned in the eighth verse. The Church is called the *mountain of myrrhe, and hill of frankincense*, 1. Because it is the place where the graces signified by these, are to be found : It is only in believers they do abound. 2. Because there they abound in prayers and praises, which ascend before him, as incense from an high place. 3. Because he accepts so kindly of their duties, that they are pleasant to him, and he delights to rest amongst them, beyond all other places, as being a *mountain of myrrhe* : In which respect, the house of God is called the house of prayer, because of the exercise of that duty frequently performed there.

The second thing is the term he sets to the performance of this promise, in these words, *Until the day break, and the shadows flee away : I will get me (saith he) to the mountain of myrrhe, till that day* : The sense is, *Amongst all places of the world, the Church is the place in which I will choose to reside, and with believers abounding in the exercise of grace and prayer ; they shall not want my presence, for there will I abide, until the everlasting day of immediate fellowship with them break up* : And so this makes for the Bride's comfort ; *Thou mayst, my spouse, (saith he) expect my company, and the acceptance of thy prayers (which are as incense to me) until that day come, as thou desirest*. Where we may see, (beside what was spoken upon this expression, *chap.* 2. 17.) 1. That Christ conforms his answers to our suits, and makes the one as extensive as the other ; the term he proposed, is that he accepts of. 2. His hearing of one prayer, gives ground to his people to expect that he will hear all their prayers ; and so he is called the *Hearer of prayer* indefinitely, *Psal.* 65. 2. And this

this is the reason why he says not, *he will turn to her*; (which would look to that one prayer, chap. 2. 17.) but he saith, *he will get him to the hill of frankincense*, which looks to all her prayers; and so his answer is more extensive than the particular sought: Which shews, 3. That as Christ will not mince his answers to believers, and make them less than their prayers, so he will often enlarge them, and make them more extensive than their prayers.

Next, from this, That he gives believers such a name as *the hill of frankincense*, which is in a special way with respect to their prayers, *Obs.* 1. That believers ought to be very frequent in prayer, like an hill that abounds in incense. 2. That Christ's presence is ever to be found, where these spiritual sacrifices of prayers and praises abound: for, wherever he hath an altar built to himself, and *records his Name*, there *he will come and bless his people*, Exod. 20. 24.

Again, That he sets down this by way of promise, it gives us ground to observe, 1. That even our sense of Christ's presence, is in and by a promise; and it is the promise thereof that should comfort and satisfy the believer, even when sense is removed, and is not for the time enjoyed, as Jo. 14. 21, 23. 2. Christ limits himself to no other term-day, for continuing of the fulfilling and performing of his promises, than that very time when believers shall be entered into the possession of what is promised; for, *I will grant thy desire* (saith he) *until the day break*, &c. that is, until the great day come, I will keep this course with believers. 3. Christ's promise of coming, and his making that sure, is one of the greatest evidences of love which he can bestow on his people. 4. There is no society or place (to speak so) but the Church, nor any person in the Church, but such as abound in spiritual sacrifices, who have a promise of Christ's presence. 5. Christ would have the thoughts of eternal life, and of immediate enjoying of himself, entertained in his Bride, and would have her confirmed in the faith of it; and therefore is there here a particular repetition of the term which had been mentioned, chap. 2. 17. 6. He would by this repetition also express, that (some way) he longs for that day of the consummation of the marriage, as well as she doth, and that he would gladly have all shadows gone betwixt him and her; which serves much to confirm her in the faith of it, and comfort her till it come.

**Verse 7.** *Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee.*

This verse contains the last piece of the commendation which Christ gives to his Bride, and it is the scope of all; whereby, having spoken of some particular parts, he now sums up all in a general, 1. Positively express, *Thou art all fair, my love*. Then 2. Negatively, *There is no spot in thee*. The reason why,

why, thus in a general, he closes up her commendation, is to shew that his forbearing the enumeration of the rest of her parts, is not because of any defect that was in her, or that his touching of some particulars was to commend these parts only; but to shew this, in general, that all of her parts, as well not named as named, were lovely. This universal commendation is not to be understood in a popish sense, as if she had had no sin; for, that will not agree with other express scriptures, nor with this Song, where she records her own faults, as *chap. 1. 6. and 3. 1. and 5. 2, 3.* And also this commendation agrees to all believers, who yet are acknowledged by themselves not to be perfect. Neither is it to be taken in an *Antinomian* sense, as if their sins and failings were not sins to them, and did not pollute them; for, 1. That is not consistent with the nature of sin; Nor, 2. With the Bride's reprobates and confessions in this Song; Nor, 3. With the present scope, which is to shew the Bride's beauty. And he doth thus highly commend her beauty, not because her sins were not sins in her, as they were in others, but because her graces were more lovely, which were not to be found in others. Hence the particular parts of the new creature, or inherent holiness, are insisted on for proof of this. Farther, this commendation did agree to believers before Christ came in the flesh: And this love-assertion, *thou art all fair*, holds true of the Bride, in these four respects, (1.) In respect of justification and absolution she is clean, tho' needing washing in other respects, *Jo. 13. Ye are clean by the word that I have spoken*, yet they needed to have their feet washed. Thus a believer is in a justified state, and legally clean and fair, so as there is no sin imputed to him, or to be found in him, to condemn him, because the Lord hath pardoned them, *Jer. 50. 20.* (2.) It is true in respect of sanctification and inherent holiness, they are all *fair*, that is, they are wholly renewed, there is no part but it is beautiful in respect of God's grace (tho' in degree it be not perfect.) Thus, where grace is true, it is extended through the whole man, and makes an universal change. (3.) It is true in respect of Christ's acceptation; and so, where there is sincerity in the manner, he overlooks and passeth by many spots: thus *thou art all fair*, that is, *In my account thou art so; I reckon not thy spots, but esteem of thee as if thou had no spot.* Christ is no severe interpreter of his people's actions; and where there is honesty, and no spots inconsistent with the state of children, *Deut. 32. 2.* he will reckon of them as if there were none at all. (4.) It is true of Christ's Bride, that she is *all fair*, in respect of Christ's design; he will make her at last *without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing*, *Eph. 5. 25, &c.* And because of the certainty of it, it is applied to her now, as being already entred in the possession thereof in her Head, in whom she is set in heavenly-places. Hence we may see, 1. The honest believer, ere all be done, will be made fully fair and without spot.

2. Christ often expounds an honest believer, from his own heart-purpose and design; in which respect they get many titles, otherwise unsuitable to their present condition; and believers themselves may someway reckon so also. If all were put together, it were a great matter for a believer to conceive and apprehend these words as spoken to him in particular from Christ's mouth, *Thou, even thou art fair*: And without this, they will want their lustre; for certainly Christ speaks so upon the matter to some, and he allows that they should believe that he speaks so unto them.

*Verse 8. Come with me from Lebanon (my Spouse) with me from Lebanon: Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions dens, from the mountains of the leopards.*

From this 8th verse, to verse 16. follows a second way how the Bridegroom manifests his love to his Bride, in other three steps, 1. He gives her a kind invitation and call, *verse 8.* 2. He sheweth her how he was taken with her love, and in a manner could not want the enjoyment thereof, *ver. 9, 10.* 3. Upon this occasion, he proceeds to a new commendation of her. And all of these are wonderful, being considered as spoken by him.

The invitation in this 8th verse, beside the title he gives her (which we take in as a motive) hath three parts; 1. The state wherein the Bride was, is set down; and this is contained in the term from which she is called. 2. The duty laid on, included in the term to which she is called. 3. The motives pressing and perswading her to give obedience thereto.

*First*, The term from which she is called, gets diverse names, 1. *Lebanon.* 2. *Amana.* 3. *Shenir and Hermon.* 4. *The lions dens and mountains of leopards,* which are added for explication of the former. *Lebanon* is a hill often mentioned in scripture, excellent for beauty, and therefore Christ's countenance is compared (*chap. 5. 5.*) to it: *Moses* desired to see the goodly *Lebanon*, *Deut. 3. 25.* It was profitable for cedar-wood, and sweet in smell by the flowers that grew on it, *verse 11.* and *Hos. 14. 6.* It was on the north-side of *Canaan*, a stately place, *Isa. 35. 1.* Therefore *Solomon* built his dwelling for pleasure there in the forest of *Lebanon*, as some conceive; tho' others think it was built at *Jerusalem*, and gets the name of the forest of *Lebanon*, for the pleasantness thereof. As for *Amana*, we read not of it, except it be that which is mentioned, *2 Kings 3. 12.* called *Abana*, but on the margent *Amana*; it is like, that river there spoken of, flowed from it, which being pleasant and stately, is preferred by *Nahman* to *Jordan*, in which the prophet appointed him

him to wash. Next, *Shenir* and *Hermion* were two hills (or two tops of one hill) mentioned, *Deut.* 3. 9. beyond *Jordan*, pleasant and fertile, and from which they might see the land of *Canaan* before they crossed *Jordan*; and which were conquered from *Og* king of *Bashan*. The tops also of these are mentioned, to shew their height, and she is here supposed to be on the top of them. Lastly, It is added, *from the lions dens, from the mountains of leopards*, not designing any new place, but shewing that lions and leopards often used upon hills, and it is like upon these, notwithstanding all their beauty: Therefore mountains are called *mountains of prey*, *Psal.* 76. 4. because wild beasts, that used to make prey, often lurked in them. There is somewhat, *Hab.* 2. 17. that confirms this, where the violence of *Lebanon*, and the spoil of beasts, is mentioned, supposing that there, beasts used violently to spoil.

By these *mountains*, here, we conceive, are understood the most excellent, eminent and choice satisfactions that are to be found amongst the creatures, wherein the men of the world delight, who are often compared to ravenous beasts: And the reason is, it is something that is conceived to be excellent, that is here implied by the description, yet such as hath no true excellency in it; therefore the Bride is called from it, and commanded to look over it, even at its height, and to leave it to the men of the world; whose portion properly these heights and excellencies are, for they have not another to enjoy or look after. By *lions* and *leopards*, we understand covetous, worldly men, who pursue the world to the destruction of themselves and others; so they are often called in scripture, as *Psal.* 57. 4, & 6. 1. For their devouring, insatiable nature, that can never have enough, but use always to prey on others. 2. For their unreasonable, brutish nature, being in their way like bruit-beasts, rather than men, *Psal.* 49. ult. 3. For their malicious nature, that are always hurting the godly that are amongst them. Again, these heights and excellencies of the world, are called the *dens* and *mountains* of these beasts, 1. Because often ungodly men have the greatest share of those, and have no more to claim unto; *their portion is in this life*, *Psal.* 17. penult. 2. Because they rest in them, and seek after no more, as lions do in their dens. These mountains then are the excellencies of the creatures, for the enjoyment of which men often use great violence; therefore they are called, *Psal.* 76. 5. *mountains of prey*, as having such beasts, as cruel men lurking in them, above which God (who is the portion of his people) is there said to be far more excellent; and thus these mountains here are opposed to the *mountain of myrrhe*, verse 6. where Christ hath his residence. Next, the Church (whose state and case is supposed to be the same naturally with the men of the world) is called from this her natural state, and from the remainders of such a frame, in two words, 1. *Come*, quite it, saith he, and come with me;

which is the same with that command, *chap. 2. 10. Rise up and come away*, implying the exercising of faith in him, and the delighting of her self in communion with him (as the spouse should do with her husband) and withdrawing from these created concernments, wherein men of the world sought their happiness. The second word is, *look from the top of these*; which word sets out faith also, so *Isa. 45. 19. Look unto me, &c.* And *looking from these*, signifieth her elevating and lifting of her affections higher than the highest excellencies of the earth, even towards heaven and the enjoyment of Christ, *Col. 3. 1, 2.* and so it saith, she is not to look to what is present, but to what is not seen, and coming, which is by faith only to be discerned and apprehended: And this is to be done, by looking over the tops of the highest of created excellencies. Now, this word, being added to the former, doth shew, that when they cannot *come*, they are to *look*; and that their looks are not to be fixed on created things, as their objects, but must ascend higher, as the *Israelites* from these mountains, *Hermon* and *Shenir*, beheld *Canaan*, with desire to be there.

*Observ. 1.* The world hath its own taking excellencies, its heights and mountains, whereby it looks very pleasant to many. 2. The most beautiful created excellency hath a palpable defect in it; the most pleasant hill hath a wild lion lodging in it, that marrs all the satisfaction that can be found there to a believer; and God hath wisely so ordered, that every gourd to them hath a worm at its root. 3. Often the men of the world are much taken with these created excellencies; they love to live in them, and dwell in them, as beasts in their dens, and know no higher design to drive, than their satisfaction in created excellencies: Yea, 4. Believers are in hazard to fall in this sin: when things go well with them in the world, they are ready to sit down there; therefore are they here called upon, that this hazard may be prevented. 5. Addictedness to the world, when men excessively pursue after either its gain, honour, applause, or pleasure, transforms men into beasts, and makes them irrational, brutish and violent, forgetting what should be their main work and end. 6. Often violence towards others, and oppression with much cruelty, is the fruit of addictedness to the things of the world: If he profit himself, such a man cares not whom he undo. 7. There is nothing more unreasonable, bitter and cruel, than a worldly atheist, whose designs are only after things that are within time; they are lions and leopards. 8. Carnal men are often, by their neighbourhood to the Saints, exceeding troublesome, even as lions in a mountain. 9. Addictedness to the world, and a surfeit with its contentments, can hardly stand with fellowship with Christ, and is most unbecoming his Bride; therefore he calls her from it. 10. Believers have, and ought to have a more high, noble and excellent design, than the greatest conqueror

Conqueror that ever was in the world : the believer in this is beyond *Alexander* the great, who desired more created worlds ; but he looks over from the highest top of all these, as undervaluing them, and longing to be at something else. 11. Believers should have their looks directed towards heaven, and their thoughts and affections (even before-hand) should be fixed there, *Col. 3. 1. Philip. 3. 20, 21.* Their face should be set that way. 12. It is faith that looks toward Christ, as coming, when he is for the time absent ; and when believers cannot win to walk and move towards him, they may look to him : and sure, Christ, who calls for this, will accept of it, till the other be attained. 13. Often in the most excellent parts of this world, such as *Lebanon, Hermon, &c.* men are most cruel and carnal ; and the Bride of Christ hath manyest enemies, and fewest friends. 14. The most excellent of created contentments, for profit, honour and pleasure, should be denied and forsaken when Christ calls. 15. There is nothing a believer would watch more against, (as that which marrs fellowship with Christ) than taking excessive contentment in created things. 16. Often a condition, which abounds in worldly contentments and delights, is very scarce of Christ's company ; therefore when he allows her his presence, he calls her to leave them, in her affection at least.

*Thirdly,* Because he knows the world is most bewitching, and the affections of his Bride are not soon weaned from it (though this be most necessary) therefore, three ways, he presseth her to deny her self in these, and follow him (which is the sum of the call) 1. Saith he, thou art *my Spouse*, that is, my Bride : It is the same word which (*Jer. 2. 32.*) is translated *Bride, Can a bride forget her attire ?* This title is frequently given her in this chapter, and *verse 1. chap. 5.* importing, 1<sup>st</sup>, A marriage-tye and relation betwixt him and her. 2<sup>dly</sup>, Love in him, owning that relation, and claiming thereby an interest in her. 3<sup>dly</sup>, A duty in her to own him as her Husband, and to forsake all her lovers, that she go not a-whoring after any other, as a wife should cleave to her husband : It is the same with what is pressed, *Psal. 45. 10, &c.* My Spouse (saith he) thou hast not thy portion in the world, therefore come away from it. 2. He presseth it from the advantage of his own company, which she should enjoy upon her obeying his Call : *Come with me* (saith he) my Spouse, and this is repeated, *come with me*, that is, Thou art mine, and I am thy Husband ; wilt thou not then come with me, *with me ?* This is a weighty argument, and none will prevail, if this do not ; Christ's company should have more weight, and be of more force to engage a believer to Christ, than all the pleasantness of the world can have to divert them : He is more excellent by far than the *mountains of prey*, *Psal. 76. 4.* therefore is his company to be preferred to them all. 3. He presseth it, from the heartless condition which she could not but have in the most excellent

excellent things in the world without Christ, they were but *dens of lions*, not for her to stay with, nor yet any way agreeing with her state and case. Hence observe, 1. When Christ and the most excellent things in the world are opposed, there will be great odds, and a vast difference seen betwixt them. 2. All the defects that abound in created excellencies, should necessitate the believer to take himself to Christ; there is no satisfaction for him till he come there. 3. Men have no great loss, that loose their affections from the world, and set them on Christ; it is but leaving the dens of lions, &c. and coming to him, who is more excellent than all the mountains of prey.

We may also read these words, by way of promise, *Thou shalt come with me*: And the scope will not be against this, it being no less an evidence of Christ's love, and no less comfortable to the Church, to have his promise, than to have his call; and all his calls having promises implied in them, both will well agree. And so that which is set down by way of precept, *Rom. 6. 12. Let not sin reign in your mortal body*, is set down by way of promise, *verse 14. of that chapter, Sin shall not have dominion over you.*

*Verse 9. Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse : thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.*

*Verse 10. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse ! how much better is thy love than wine ! and the smell of thine ointments, than all spices !*

Although what Christ hath spoken in the former verse be wonderful, yet these expressions, *ver. 9, 10.* being spoken by Jesus Christ to a poor sinful creature, passeth admiration: They may be looked on as the reason of his former call and promise; he thus seriously invites her to come to him, because he cannot want her company; for, his heart is ravished with her. The scope in both verses is the same, but is more clearly exprest, *verse 10.* not so much setting forth the Church's loveliness (though that is not to be excluded) as his loving kindness, who is admirably affected towards her, as every word in matter and manner of both, shews. In them consider, 1. The titles given her, which are the same in both verses. 2. What is asserted, and that is, that his heart is *ravished*. 3. The manner how this is expressed, in a sort of holy passion, doubling the expression. 4. Wherewith it is his heart is so ravished, it is (saith he) *with one of thine eyes, &c.* in the end of the 9th verse, and more fully amplified, *verse 10.*

The titles are two: One of them, namely, that she is his *spouse*, hath been spoken of; but his repeating of it, shews a kind of glorying in it, as being very

very much delighted therewith. The other title, *my sister*, is added, and it doth import these five things, 1<sup>st</sup>, A condescending upon Christ's part to be thus joined in kindred to the believer; and so it takes in his incarnation, whereby he was made in all things like to his brethren, Heb. 2. 17. Our blessed Lord Jesus is man, believers are his brethren and sisters, they are bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh: and for his Bride's consolation this is asserted. 2<sup>dly</sup>, A privilege whereto she is advanced upon her part, and that is, that by adoption believers are become sons and daughters to the Lord God Almighty; not only friends but children, and so heirs and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, Rom. 8. so as now they are as brethren and sisters, which is an unspeakable advancement. 3<sup>dly</sup>, It imports a change of nature; as well as of state in believers; so that they partake of the divine nature and Spirit with Christ Jesus, as it is, Heb. 2. 11. *He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are of one*; which is a special ground of his sibness and kindred to believers, not common to others, but special to them, and founded on their sanctification. 4<sup>thly</sup>, It implies sympathy, friendliness, and a kindly esteem in him, that takes her up, and speaks of her, and to her, in all the most sweet relations of mother, sister, spouse, &c. *Matth. 12. ult.* 5<sup>thly</sup>, It shews his owning of all these relations; he is not ashamed to call believers, *sisters and brethren*, Heb. 2. 11. *Obs.* 1. There are many wonderful, near and sweet relations betwixt Christ and the believer. 2. Christ is the most faithful owner of them, and is in a most friendly way forthcoming to them, according to them all.

Secondly, The thing asserted here, is, *Thou hast ravished my heart*. The word in the first language is one, and it signifieth, *Thou hast hearted me*, or so to speak, *Thou hast unhearted me*: It is no where else in scripture, but here; Christ's unspeakable love, as it were, coins new words to discover itself by, it is so unexpressible. The word is borrowed from the passionateness of love; when it seizes deeply on a man, it leaves him not master of his own heart, but the object loved hath it, and (as it were) possesseth it, and commands it more than the man himself: So the Gospel saith, *Where a man's treasure is, (that is, the thing a man esteems most of) there, as it were, his heart is*, and not in the party that loves, *Matth. 6. 21*. So the common phrase is, *such a man hath my heart*, when he is dearly beloved; and thus, in a subtil way, *Ab-salom* is said to have stolen away the hearts of the people from his father. It is in form, *My spouse, thou hast my heart, thou hast won it, and as it were by violence taken away, I am not master of it, I cannot but love thee*.

It is hard to draw observations, that may suitably express the thing here spoken of; only we may hint at these things, 1. Love in Christ to a believer hath strong and wonderful effects on him, in reference to them. 2. The believer hath Christ's heart, he hath a seat in his affection, he possesseth his love.

love (for no other thing hath his heart) and he may promise himself from Christ, whatever he can desire for his good, even as if he had his heart under his command; for (so to speak) he can refuse believers nothing which they seek, and which he knows to be for their good. 3. Love in Christ to a believer, it is at a height, or, it is a love of the highest degree: There is no greater intenseness thereof imaginable; for, to have the heart ravished, is the expression of the greatest love.

Thirdly, The manner how he expresseth this, is by doubling the expression, *Thou hast ravished my heart, thou hast ravished my heart*: And this is to shew, that this word fell not rashly from him, but was drawn out by the vehemency of affection in him. 2. That he allows believers to believe this great love and affection he hath to them, and would have them dwelling on the believing thoughts of it; and therefore he doubles the expression, while he intimates his love unto them: Only remember, there are no disorderly passions in Christ, as in us; yet, that there is sympathy and love in him, and passionate effects of love from him, cannot be denied.

The fourth thing is, wherewith it is his heart is so ravished; it may be thought to be some great thing that thus prevails over Christ: Now, what it is, is set down in two expressions, which are joined to the former, to make this love of his the more wonderful. That which was conquered, or ravished, was *his heart*; that which doth it, is *her eye*, the eye or look of a poor sinful creature, even of such a person as may be despised in the world, and like *Lazarus* full of sores, and not admitted to mens company. 2. It is not with *both her eyes*, but (saith he) with *one of thy eyes*, that is (as it were) with a squint-look; a side-look of the Bride prevailed thus with him. One eye is not here mentioned, as preferring the beauty of one of her eyes to the other; but to shew what excellent beauty is in her, and much more what infinite love is in him, that he could not (because he would not) resist a look of one of her eyes cast toward him. We shew what is understood by *eyes*, *verse 1.* and it is explicate in the following verse, to hold forth love especially here (lovers using to signify affection by their eyes) yet it takes in knowledge as being presupposed, and faith as going alongst. The second expression is, *with one chain of thy neck*: These chains were spoken of, *chap. 1. 10.* whereby, we shew, was signified her inherent holiness, with imputed righteousness, which by faith she possessed; and so here also it signifies her graces, especially her exercising faith on him; for so the neck was expounded, *verse 9.* to be understood of faith, which joineth the believer to Christ as his head: And it is said to have *chains*, because it never wants excellent fruits, wherewith it is adorned, when it is exercised. One *chain* is spoken of, not as if she had not had more, or as if he did not respect them all, but to hold forth this, that one of her

her chains (as it were) did overcome him ; and so it may be gathered, what will both eyes do, and moe chains, when one so prevails ? The scope then here doth shew, 1. That Christ is easily prevailed with by his people : O how easily is he overcome by them, who have love to him, and faith in him ! 2. That Christ stands not on the degree of his peoples graces, nor doth he suspend his love and acceptation of a person, upon such or such a degree ; but wherever reality and sincerity are, if it were in the meanest degree, and but one look, or one chain, he will yield to it, and accept of it. 3. It is to provoke and encourage believers to cast a look to Christ, when they find their faith to be so weak that they can do no more ; and to confirm them in the expectation of good from him freely, without any rigid reckoning : It is not only the strong believer, and the strong acts of faith and love, that prevail with Christ ; but he condescends to be overcome, even by the weakest, with whom the sincerity of these graces is to be found.

This is further followed and explicate, *verse 10:* and that two ways. 1<sup>st</sup>, By an indefinite question, *How fair is thy love !* 2<sup>dly</sup>, By two comparative questions, whereby, in two similitudes, her love is preferred to the most excellent things, *How much better, &c.* The thing commended is *her love*, that is, the love wherewith she loves him, wherewith her heart breathes after him, delights in him, esteems of him, and is zealous to please him, &c. The commendation he gives her love, is, that it is *fair*. And by the way we may observe, that this clearly shews, that by all the former parts of her beauty, are understood spiritual graces : Now (saith he) *thy love is fair*, that is, *it is lovely and acceptable to me* ; As beauty and fairness are much esteemed amongst men, so this grace of love is a beautiful thing in Christ's Bride. The manner of the expression is by way of question and admiration, *How fair ! I can get nothing* (saith he) *to compare it with* : A wonder, that Christ should be so taken with the love of sinners, as to admire it, or think that their love exceeds all expression ; for, so men use to express what they cannot express : But this doth indeed shew, that the height and depth, and length and breadth of that love, which Christ hath to believing sinners, passeth all knowledge, and is beyond all words. *Obs.* 1. That a believer is one that loves Christ, and true faith hath always this grace of love joined to it. 2. That love, where it is sincere and true, is a property of Christ's Bride and Spouse ; there are no other in the world who love him, but these who are espoused to him. 3. Where love to Christ is, there Christ loves : He cannot but love them that love him ; and there is nothing more acceptable to him, than the faith that is working by love. 4. Our Lord Jesus takes special notice of the frame of the heart, and what seat he hath in the affections of his people ; he lays more weight on their love than on their work, tho' true love can never be without works.

The second way, how he explains and illustrates this, is more particular, by two comparisons, yet keeping still the former manner of expression, by way of question and admiration: The first is, *How much better is thy love than wine!* Wine may be looked on in two respects, 1<sup>st</sup>, As it is useful in man's life, and and refreshful, *Psal.* 104. 15. *It maketh glad the heart of man*; and, *Eccl.* 10. 19. *it maketh the heart merry*: Wine is one of the most comfortable creatures, therefore she calls *his love better than wine*, chap. 1. 2. Thus observe, 1. Christ will not be behind with his people, neither in kindness nor in the expressions of it; for this is beyond hers, chap. 1. 2. Not that he hath a better object to love, but because the love wherewith he loves her, is like himself, and more excellent than hers. 2. There is no such refreshful thing in all the work of creation to Christ, no such feast, as the warming of a sinner's heart with love to him is: This (*Luke* 7. 47.) is thought more of by Christ in a poor woman, than all the great feast he was invited unto by the rich Pharisee.

Again, we may look on wine as used in the ceremonial services and drink-offerings, *Lev.* 23. 13, &c. Thus the meaning is, *Thy love is preferable to all outward performances and sacrifices*, as *Hos.* 6. 7. Love being the principle within, from which all our performances should flow, it is not opposed to sacrifice simply, or to obedience; but, 1<sup>st</sup>, Supposing these to be separate, he prefers love: If it were to cast in but a mite of duty out of love, it will be more acceptable than the greatest bulk of duties without love, as is clear in the case of the widow, *Luke* 21. yea, if men would *give their bodies to be burnt*, without this, *1 Cor.* 13. 3. it will avail nothing. 2<sup>dly</sup>, It saith, that where both the inward principle and the outward fruit or work are, the Lord respects that more than this, and he respects this in a manner but for that.

The second comparison is to the same purpose, in these words, *and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!* Ointments typified the graces of the Spirit, the pouring out whereof is called *the unction*, *John* 2. 20. and *the oil of joy*, *Psal.* 45. 7. The *smell* thereof signifieth the acceptableness of these graces, when in exercise; our Lord Jesus finds a sweet savour in them, as ointments cast a smell that is refreshful to men (as was said upon chap. 3. 6.) The grace of love, mentioned before, is here included; but under *ointments* there is more comprehended, to shew, 1<sup>st</sup>, That where one grace is, there are all the rest of the graces of the Spirit to be found. 2<sup>dly</sup>, That love to Christ, and zeal for him, holds believers stirring, and makes them send forth a sweet and savoury smell: This smell is preferred to all spices, not to one or two, but to all. Spices were either used as gifts, because they were precious and costly; so the queen of Sheba propined Solomon with them, *2 Kings* 10. 2. and the wise-men offered such to Christ, *Matth.* 2. 11. And so it saith, there is no such propine can be offered to Christ, as love, and the graces of the Spirit when

when they are in exercise. Again, spices were used in the Levitical services and holy oil, *Exod. 30. 23, 24.* and so they are to be considered as wine was in the last sense formerly spoken of, and it shews how preferable the inward exercise of grace is to all external duties. Lastly, They are not only preferred, while he saith, *thy love is better, &c.* but as passing comparison, they are extolled far above all these things with which they are compared, *How fair, or how much better is thy love than wine? &c.* O my Spouse, saith he, *it is not to be wondered that thy love ravishes my heart; for, there is no created thing so precious, nor any external service so acceptable to me, as it is.* Hence observe, 1. That inward love, or the inward exercise of grace, and outward performances, are separable. 2. That when outward performances are separate from the inward exercise of love and other graces, the Lord respects them not. 3. That love is a good and necessary principle of all duties, and especially of the duties of worship. 4. These, who have any thing of the lively exercise of love to Christ, want never a propine that will be acceptable to him; if it were but a mite, or a cup of cold water, or a look to Christ, if love be the principle from which these flow, they will be very acceptable with him.

Verse 11. *Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the hony-comb: hony and milk are under thy tongue, and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.*

Having thus expressed his affection to his Bride, he breaks forth in a positive commendation of her (which may be looked upon as the ground of the comparative commendation in the former verse) and he describes and commends her at once, these two ways, 1<sup>st</sup>, Touching, as it were, at some particulars (which are indeed generals) wherein her loveliness appears in actual fruits, *verse 11.* 2<sup>dly</sup>, In seven comparisons he holds forth her fruitfulness, from the 12. to the 16 *verse*, wherein he not only commends her by the fruits which she brings forth, but from her fitness or aptitude to bring forth these fruits; so that she cannot but be fruitful: As if one commending an orchard from the fruit, apples, pomegranates, &c. or whatever other fruits are in orchards, should then fall upon the commendation of the orchard itself, in its situation, fences, waters, or kinds of the plants, &c. so is it here. And this last commendation is to be looked upon as the cause of the former.

In this 11<sup>th</sup> *verse* there are three particulars commended; under which, we conceive, much of the series of a believer's walk is understood. The first is her lips, which are commended from this, that they drop as the hony-comb. By lips, as *verse 3.* and frequently in the Song (and so in the Proverbs, a man of lips is taken for a man of talk) is understood her speech, words or discourse,

especially to others. These her words (or her speech) are compared, for the matter, to *hony* or the *hony-comb*, that is sweet, nourishing, healthful and pleasant; as *Prov. 16. 24. Pleasant words are as the hony-comb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.* And by *hony*, in scripture, is often understood that which is excellent, and useful for the life of man; and therefore it was a property of *Canaan*, that it *flowed with milk and hony*, which are put together in the following piece of her commendation. 2dly, Her speech or words are commended from the manner or qualification of them, *They drop as the hony-comb*, &c. Dropping words signify, 1. Seasonable words, which are like dew, dropping for the edification of others, as dew by its dropping makes the fields fruitful. 2. Prudence and moderation in discourse; and so dropping is opposed to floods, that with violence overflow. 3. This phrase signifieth a continuance in seasonable, prudent and edifying discourse, as *Job 27. 22. My words dropped on them*; and *Deut. 31. 2. My doctrine shall drop as the rain: Thus the lips of the wise feed many*, *Prov. 10. 21.* Obs. 1. A believer's words tend to edification, and are for the true benefit and advantage of others. 2. Every subject is not the matter of their discourse; but, as the *hony*, it is excellent and choice, and that which ministers grace to the hearers. 3. Mens words give a great proof of what is in them; and, when rightly ordered, they are a good evidence of their love and respect to Christ. 4. A well-ordered tongue is a most commendable thing before Christ; and every word that proceeds from the mouth, is observed by him. 5. Christ's spouse should be observably different, as to her words and discourse, from all others; *Thy lips, O my spouse, saith he, drop as the hony-comb*: Implying, that, whatever be the way of others, it becomes the spouse of Christ to have her words seasonable, favourable and edifying.

The second thing here commended reacheth more inwardly, and it is in these words, *hony and milk are under thy tongue*: There will be sometimes smooth words as butter, when there is much venom within; it is not so with Christ's Bride. By *under the tongue*, which is the part commended, we understand the heart or inward-man, as it is distinguished from the bare expression of the tongue or words, which are only spoken (as we say) from the teeth forward: So, *Psal. 66. 17. He was exalted under my tongue*, (as it is in the Original) is expounded in the following verse, by *heart-regarding*: There was an agreement betwixt his words and his heart, without which God would not have accepted his words. And seeing, when it is said of the wicked, that *mischief and vanity are under their tongue*, *Psal. 10. 7.* *Rom. 3. 13.* whereby their deceitful rotten heart, and the venom that is within, is signified; so here must be understood inward sincerity, and a good frame of heart within, as well as good words without. The commendation is, that there are

*milk*

*milk and hony under her tongue*; it is almost the same with the former: As her words were edifying, so there was much edifying matter in her heart, or *under her tongue*; the hony-comb (as it were) was there, and it by words dropped to others. *Milk* is added, because it is also sweet and nourishing. In a word, that which he here points at, is, that her inward constitution and frame is like a *Canaan*, flowing with milk and hony; so fertile and fruitful is Christ's Bride. Here observe, 1. That Christ takes not only notice of words, but of what is under the words; the disposition and frame of the heart, and the thoughts thereof, are observed by him. 2. There is a suitableness often betwixt the heart within, and the words without: when there is hony under the tongue, then the tongue cannot but drop; for, *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*. 3. It is a most commendable thing in the believer, when the inner-man is right, in a lively and edifying frame, and when the heart is watched over, so that no thought enters in, or word goes forth, but what is edifying. 4. The heart would be furnished with edifying, profitable purposes and thoughts, as well as the mouth with pertinent and useful words; and that is as the fountain, from which this must run and flow. 5. They will feed and edify others best by their words, who feed best upon the most healthful subjects, and savoury thoughts themselves.

The third thing commended, is, *the smell of her garments*. Garments are that which covers our nakedness, and are for decorement externally put upon the body: Sometimes by them is understood Christ's righteousness, whom we are said to *put on*, Gal. 3. 27. sometimes our own inherent holiness, which makes our way comely before others, and hides our nakedness from them; so, Job 29. 19. saith, *I put on righteousness, and it clothed me*. Now, here it is to be taken especially in the last sense (tho' not only) as setting forth the outward adorning of her walk with holiness; and this is the third part of her commendation, distinguished from the other two, which pointed at her words and thoughts. And so it is the practice of holiness that is here commended, which is compared to garments, because good works are called the clothing of such as profess godliness, 1 Tim. 2. 9. and 1 Pet. 3. 3, 4. The *smell* of them is the favour and relish of these good works to others, and also to him; even as it is said, that Jacob's garments did smell to his father (to which this may allude) so our holiness, being washed in the blood of the Lamb, is very savoury to him, and is also savoury to others; yea, the smell thereof is as the smell of *Lebanon*, which was an hill that abounded with trees and flowers, exceeding savoury and delightsom: whereas a corrupt conversation is exceeding unfavoury, as rottenness and dead mens bones. In sum, this completes believers commendation, when their words are edifying, their heart answerable to their words in true sincerity, and their outward walk adorning to the Gospel,

pel, so as their natural nakedness and pollution appears not in it. *Observ.* 1. Where there is true honesty within, it will appear in the fruits of holiness without. 2. There is no garment or clothing, that can adorn or beautify men, as holiness doth a believer. 3. Tho' outward profession alone be not all, yet is it necessary for completing the commendation of a believer. 4. Altho' good works be not the ground of our relation to Christ, but follows on it; and tho' it be not on the account of our works, that the Lord is pleased with us to justify us; yet are the good works of a believer and of a justified person, when done in faith, acceptable to God, and an odour and sweet savour to him, *Philip. 4. 18.*

**Verse 12.** *A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse: a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.*

Having thus summed up her carriage in the former threefold commendation, now he proceeds both to describe and commend her, by a sevenfold comparison, wherein (to say so) the rhetorick of our Lord's love abounds: Each of them may point out these three things, 1. They describe somewhat the nature of a believer, or Christ's Bride. 2. They evidence Christ's love and care, which he hath toward her. 3. They hold forth her duty in reference to her self. We shall shortly explain them, as they relate to this scope.

In this 12th verse, we have three of these comparisons, whereby she is described and commended. *First*, She is compared to a garden inclosed: A garden is a plot of ground, separate from other places, for delight and recreation of the owner, having many flowers in it, and much pains taken on it; so believers are, 1st, Set apart by God beside all others in the world, and much pains is taken on them; the trees in Christ's garden are *digged about and dunged*, *Luke 13. 8.* 2dly, They are his delight, being separate from others for his own use, with whom he dwells, in whom he takes pleasure, and amongst whom he feeds, *chap. 6. 2.* 3dly, They are furnished with many excellent graces, fruits of the Spirit, which are planted in them as flowers in a garden, *Gal. 5. 21.* Next, this garden is *inclosed*; it is a special property of gardens to be so: To be inclosed, is by a wall or hedge to be fenced from the trampling and eating-up of beasts, and also from the hazard of winds; so, *Isa. 5. 2.* The vineyard of the Lord of hosts (which is his Church) is said to be fenced, a wall is built about it, to defend it from the danger of beasts, and storms. And this sheweth, (1.) His care of her, in watching over her, *Isa. 27. 23.* And, (2.) Her watchfulness over her self, whereby she is not common or accessible to every one; but as she is defended by his care, so also she hath a watch her self at the door of her lips, of her eyes, of her ears, &c. She is not

not like a city without walls, obnoxious to every assault and temptation, but hath a hedge of divine protection, which is as a wall of fire about her to defend her ; and also a guard of watchfulness and holy fear, in the exercise of which the believer hath rule over his own spirit, which (*Prov. 25. 28.*) is implied to be as strong walls about a city.

The *second* similitude, wherewith she is compared, is a *spring shut up* : Springs were of great price in these hot countries, and served much for making gardens fruitful, as is implied, *Isa. 58. 11.* where it is promised to the Church, Thou shalt be as a *watered garden* : Hence the righteous is called, like a tree planted by the *rivers of water*, *Psal. 1. 3.* and, on the contrary, the barren condition of his people is described, *Isa. 1. 30.* by the similitude of a garden, that *hath no water*. In a word, she is not only a garden, but a spring, that is furnished with moisture and water, for making her fruitful. More particularly, by this may be set out the graces of the spirit, compared to *waters*, *Joh. 7. 38, 39.* and said to become a *well of water* in these that believe on Christ, *John 4. 14.* for, these graces of the Spirit, and his influence on them, doth keep all things in the believer's souls case, fresh and lively, as a spring doth make a garden green and fruitful. Next, this spring is *shut up* ; for so were springs in these countries, where they were rare, as we see by *Jacob's* rolling the stone away, *Gen. 29. 8.* And this kept the waters from being corrupted by the sun, and also from being bemudded by beasts : This signifieth the preciousness of the graces and influences of the Spirit, wherewith believers are furnished. 2. Pureness and clearness in them, as in waters that are not bemudded. 3. A care she hath to keep them pure from carnal passions, or fruits of her own spirit, that would bemudd all.

The *third* comparison is on the matter of the same, but adds a further degree to the former ; she is (saith he) a *fountain sealed* : A fountain may signify waters springing in greater abundance ; and sealing doth signify not only shutting up, but securing it by a seal, after it is shut up : So, the den of lions was sealed, after *Daniel* was cast into it, *Dan. 6. 17.* And the stone was sealed, that was put on Christ's grave, that so it might not be opened by any, but by these that sealed it. And, though there be other uses of sealing, yet we conceive that which is aimed at here, is, 1. To shew the Church is not common, but well kept and sealed, so that none can trouble believers peace, without Christ's leave, who hath sealed them by his Spirit to the day of redemption, *Eph. 4. 30, &c.* 2. To shew Christ's particular right to the Church and her graces, and his owning of her and them, she bears his seal (as the hundred and forty four thousand, *Rev. 7. are sealed*) there is none but himself, that hath access to these waters ; her graces and fruits are all reserved for him, *chap. 7. 13.* 3. It shews (to say so) her closeness, and resolute watchfulness, so that there

is no gaining upon her to bemudd her condition, without advertancy and observation, more than waters can be drawn from a sealed fountain, the seal not being broken : Like that phrase, *Prov. 5. 15. Drink out of thine own cistern, let them be thine own, &c.* She hath her own distinct fountain, from which she draws influences, and that she preserves and secures to her self. 4. It shews a kind of sacredness in this fountain, so that nothing may meddle with it, more than that which is marked and separate by a seal. In sum, the *first* comparison shews, That Christ's bride or the believer is to be fruitful. The *second*, what makes her fruitful, the spring of the Spirit. The *third* shews her care to keep it clear, and to have it running and flowing, that she may be fruitful.

Verse 13. *Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits, camphire, with spikenard.*

Verse 14. *Spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrhe, and aloes, with all the chief spices.*

The *fourth* comparison follows, *ver. 13, 14.* wherein she is compared to an orchard (as before to a garden) planted with divers and excellent plants. Now, this includes these three things, which he adds to the former commendation, 1. That the believer hath many graces, he is an *orchard* that is planted with many trees and plants. 2. That the believer's graces, as they are many, so they are various ; and therefore trees and spices of divers sorts are reckoned here. 3. That the believer's graces are excellent for kind, as well as many for number and variety, they are as *spikenard, saffron, &c. with all the chief spices.* And as it commends an orchard, to have many plants, and great variety, and to want none ; so to have them of the best kinds, adds much to the commendation, when it is fruitful of these. Thus the believer is furnished with many various graces of the Spirit, as plants planted in his soul, and these of the best kind, rising from the most excellent seed that can be, the Spirit of Christ. And so the graces of believers are rare and precious, in respect of any thing that natural men have, which are but like shrubs in a dry wilderness.

Besides these, we may further observe, 1. That to have fruit, and abundance of fruit, will not prove one to be a believer, except it be choice fruit which he brings forth. 2. Believers fruits, and the graces that are in them, differ from the most excellent parts and gifts that can be in natural men, or most refined hypocrites. 3. It is excellent and commendable, when all the graces of the Spirit flow and increase together in the believer.

It is like, the Holy Ghost may here signify the effects and properties of divers graces, by these several spices and fruits ; and, it may be, *Solomon* understood

stood the particular signification of every one of them ; for, having so great an insight in natural and spiritual things, 'tis like he did not conjecturally, but on knowledge, mention such spices, and no others : But we must hold on the general ; they are precious, physical, savory and delectable fruits, and so are the graces of the Spirit to one that hath them, to others they converse with, and to Christ in respect of his acceptation ; they are like an orchard or garden, that abounds with these. This is the scope, wherein we rest.

Verse 15. *A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.*

The *fifth*, *sixth* and *seventh* similitudes are contained in this verse, wherein the Lord, following the same scope, further insists and explicates what manner of fountain this is, which makes the believer so fruitful. *First*, She is a fountain of gardens : A fountain was spoken of, *verse 12.* whereby is signified an inward principle (to say so) or spring, which from within sendeth forth and furnisheth waters. Here she is called a fountain of gardens ; she was called a garden, *verse 12.* here a fountain of gardens in the plural number : By this is holden forth, 1. The end of grace in a believer ; it is given him, not only for himself, but also for the use of others, as the gifts of the Spirit are given to every one to profit withal, 1 Cor. 11. 7. 2. It shews, that believers act and exercise their graces for others edification, as a fountain that some-way is common for the use of moe gardens ; and so it points out what publick spirits they should have, intending the edification of all to whom they can conveniently communicate their gifts and graces. 3. It shews the abundance of spirit and life (to say so) wherewith Christ's Bride is furnished, so as she may communicate for the admonishing, strengthening and edifying of others with her self ; as it is, Rom. 15. 14. where believers are said to be full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, and able to admonish one another.

The *sixth* similitude is, *A well of living waters* : This is not only to difference her from a cistern, that hath water, but hath no spring in it ; but also to shew the nature of the Spirit of grace in believers, it proves quickning and healing to these that have it. Both these are held forth, John 4. 14. He that drinks of this water, shall never thirst ; for it shall be in him a well of living water, springing up to eternal life. So is it also, John 7. 38, 39. Where the Spirit of grace is, it will be springing ; and grace will never dry up, where it is true.

The *last* similitude is, *And streams from Lebanon* : Which saith, that Christ's Bride is not only a fountain, but also she is a stream ; and it holdeth forth, 1<sup>st</sup>, That grace in her hath its rise from another, tho' it beget a spring in

her; as if *Lebanon* sent a stream to a garden, which did become a spring by its constant flowing there. 2dly, By a stream also is set forth the abundance of grace in believers; it is in them not as a brook, but as a stream. Next, *Lebanon* was a hill much commended, it is like sweet streams issued from it: It is written, that *Jordan*, which watered much of the land, had its rise and spring there. In the 5. chapter, verse 15. Christ's countenance is compared to *Lebanon*; and so here, while the flowing of grace in her is called a stream from *Lebanon*, the derivation of grace and of the Spirit from Christ Jesus is holden forth; which, tho' it have a seat, and becomes a fountain in the believer, yet it hath its rise from him, and is kept flowing and springing by him: It is as a fountain derived by a stream from *Lebanon*, and otherwise any spring of grace that is in a believer would soon run dry. All these being put together, and compared with what is before, shew, 1. That the believer is fitted by Christ not only with spiritual life, and a stock of habitual graces, but also with every thing that may make him lively and fruitful in the exercise of these. 2. This contrivance of spiritual influence, that makes believers fruitful, is a most lovely and excellent thing. 3. The great commendation of believers is grounded upon the graces of the Spirit that are in them, and upon the influences of the same Spirit that comes from Christ to them. 4. Where grace is, it will have fruits, and be savory in the conversation, in the exercise thereof. 5. It is the best evidence of grace, and of Christ's influence and Spirit, when it appeareth in the fruits; these prove the believer to be an orchard, and a fountain. 6. These graces, that make a believer fruitful, have not their rise in, or from a believer, but from Christ; and the fountain that is in them, is but a stream that comes from him.

### B R I D E.

Verse 16. *Awake, O north-wind, and come, thou south, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out: let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.*

Christ having now been large in commending the Bride, she steps to in this verse (as it were, taking the opportunity of his nearness) and puts up her desires to him, briefly in two suits, which are grounded on the commendation that he gives her, and shews what is the great design that she aims at, now when she hath Christ's ear; and she follows these suits so, as she acknowledgeth all her fruitfulness (for which she is commended) to flow from him, and to depend on him, who is therefore so much the more to be commended and extolled himself. In sum, the sense is this, *Tho' I be a garden* (saith she)

and

and have good plants habitually in me, yet will they not bud nor flow, nor can they be fruitful, except the Spirit (which is as the stream from Lebanon) blow to make them so: Therefore, O Spirit, come, and let me partake of thy influences and breathings, that my Beloved may have an invitation thereby, to come; and when come, may be entertained upon his own fruits.

The first petition is, for liveliness and fruitfulness; The second is, for the Beloved's presence, which is the end of the former: And these two, life and sense, are (as it were) the air that kindly-believers love to breathe into. That both these are the Bride's words, may thus be collected, 1<sup>st</sup>, Because they look prayer-like; and it is more suitable for her to say, *Come*, than for him: yea, the Spirit being invited to come to the garden, it is clear the party that speaks hath need of his presence. And that it is not said, *Go*, but *Come*, with reference to the necessity of the party that speaks, doth make it evident, that it cannot be spoken by the Bridegroom, but by the Bride; for, so the phrase every where, and in the next words, *Let my Beloved come*, imports. 2<sup>dly</sup>, That the last part of the verse is her suit, none can deny; and there is no reason to conceive two different parties, seeing both the matter of the suits, and the manner of speaking, will agree to the same party.

In the first petition we may consider these two, *First*, The thing sought. *Secondly*, The end wherefore that which she seeks, and prays for, is held forth, as it were, in three steps or degrees, in three expressions, *Awake, O north-wind, come, thou south, blow upon my garden*. For understanding whereof, we are to look, 1<sup>st</sup>, What these winds signifie. 2<sup>dly</sup>, What this garden is. And, 3<sup>dly</sup>, What these acts, of *awaking, coming and blowing* are. By winds often in scripture is understood the Spirit of God in his mighty operations, as *Ezek. 37. 3, 14*. And the special work and operation of the Spirit is compared to wind, 1. For its purifying nature. 2. For its cooling, comforting, refreshing power and efficacy. 3. For its fructifying vertue, winds being, especially in these hot countries, both exceeding refreshful, and also useful to make trees and gardens fruitful. *Lastly*, For its undiscernable manner of working; as, *John 3. 8. The wind blows where it lists, &c.* yet hath his operation real effects with it. And it is clear that the Spirit is here intended, because it is the Spirit's blowing that only can make the spices or graces of a believer to flow, as the wind doth the seeds and flowers in a garden. *Next*, By *north* and *south-wind* are understood the same Spirit, being conceived and taken up in respect of his diverse operations (as it is, *1 Cor. 12. 6, 7, 8, &c.* and therefore called *the seven spirits of God*, *Rev. 1. 4.*) sometime cooling and in a sharper manner nipping, as the north-wind; sometimes working in his people more softly and warmly, and in a still and quiet manner, like the south-wind; Yet, as both winds are useful for the purging and making fruitful of

a garden, so are the diverse operations of the Spirit to the souls of believers. In a word, hereby is understood the different operations of the Spirit, whether convincing and mortifying, or quickning and comforting, &c. both which contribute to make her lively and fruitful, which is the scope of her petition.

2dly, By *garden*, is understood the believer, called a garden, *verse 12.* and an orchard, *verse 13.* because the believer doth abound in divers graces, as a garden doth in many flowers. And she calls it *my garden*, as he calleth the plants *her plants*, that were planted there, *verse 13.* and as she called the vineyard *hers*, *chap. 1. 6. & 8. 12.* which also is *his*, *verse 11.* As also, this garden is called *his*, in the following words, *chap. 6. 1.* it is *his* by propriety, as the heritor and purchaser: as also, all these graces in her are *hers*, as being the servant that hath the oversight of them, and who hath gotten them as talents to trade with for the Master's use. All that we have, *viz.* a soul, gifts, graces, &c. are given to us as talents, which we are to dress for bringing forth fruit to the owner, as the following words do clear.

3dly, The actings and workings of the Spirit are held forth in three words, which are as so many branches of her petition. The first is, *Awake.* This word is often used by God's people in dealing with him, *Awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord, &c. Isa. 51. 9.* It is not as if the Spirit were at any time sleeping; but she desires that by some effects, sensible to her, he would let it be known he is stirring. The second word, *Come*, is to the same purpose: The Spirit, considered in himself, cannot be said to come or go, being every where present; but this is to be understood in respect of the effects of his presence, and so he is said to come and go: Thus, while she saith, *Come*, the meaning is, *Let me find some sign of thy presence, quickning and stirring my graces.* The last word is, *Blow upon my garden.* Blowing holds forth the operation, whereby the Spirit produceth his effects in believers: It is not the Spirit himself, nor the fruits of the Spirit that are in believers, that are here understood; but the operation of the Spirit, whereby he influenceth, or (if we may so speak) infuseth them (as God breathed in *Adam* the breath of life) and whereby he stirs, excites and quickens them for acting. The prayer, then, is directed to the Spirit (as, *Rev. 1. 14.*) considering the Spirit essentially as the same God with the Father and Son, (in which respect, to pray by name to one person of the Godhead, is to pray to all the Three, who in our worship are not to be divided) that he would by his operations, which are divers and various for believers good, so stir and quicken his own graces in her, that seeing she is a garden wherein the Beloved takes pleasure, her graces for his satisfaction may be exercised, and made to favour, to the end that he may the more manifest himself in sweet communion with her.

Next,

*Next,* The end, wherefore she presseth this suit so much, is, *that her spices may flow out*: In a word, it is, that she might be fruitful; for, tho' there were many graces in her, yet, without the Spirit's breathings and influences, they would be as unbeaten spices, that did not send forth their smell.

*Obs.* 1. Altho' a believer have grace, yet it is not always in exercise; yea, it may be, and often is interrupted in its exercise. 2. That the believer's great desire is to be fruitful, and to have grace in exercise, that they may be delighted in by Christ: It is not only their desire to have grace habitually, but actually to have it in exercise. 3. There is nothing can make a believer lively and fruitful, but the influences of the Spirit: And that same Spirit, that works grace, must quicken it and keep it in exercise. 4. There may be an interruption of the influences of the Spirit, so as his blowing may in a great measure cease. 5. The same Spirit hath divers operations, and divers ways of working and manifesting himself: sometimes as the south-wind, more smoothly; sometimes as the north-wind, more sharply. 6. All his operations, how rough soever some of them may appear, are always useful to believers, and tend to make them fruitful: And to this end, the most sharp influences contribute, as well as the more comfortable. 7. Believers would walk under the conviction of their own inability to act their graces, and of the necessity of the Spirit's influences, for drawing them forth to acting and exercise. 8. They, who are thus sensible, may seek after the Spirit for that end: and it is a good frame, in order to the obtaining of life and quickning by the Spirit of Christ, when the sense of their own inability, their love of fruitfulness, and the faith of attaining it by his Spirit, puts them to seek after it. 9. Prayer is a necessary and excellent mean for stirring up one in a secure frame, and for attaining the Spirit to revive and quicken the work of his grace. 10. Believers may beg the Spirit to quicken them, when they find themselves lifeless; as well as they may ask pardon, when they find themselves under guilt. 11. Believers will be, and should be as desirous of liveliness and fruitfulness, as of sense; yea, this is the order by which they must come, and should seek to come to the obtaining of sensible presence. 12. No commendation of any attainment in believers, nor any clearness of interest, should make them sit down on their attainments, or become negligent; but, on the contrary, should stir them up to aim at the more liveliness and spiritualness, that they may be answerable to that interest they have in him, and to the commendation he allows upon them: For which cause, this petition follows immediately upon the former commendation.

The second petition, which goes alongst with the former, is for the Beloved's presence, *Let my Beloved (saith she) come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.* Her desire, here, is twofold, 1st, That Christ would come: This doth

doth respect a greater degree of nearness, notwithstanding of any thing she enjoyed. 2dly, That he would eat his pleasant fruits, that is, familiarly and friendly delight in his own graces; and therefore it was she prayed for the influences of the Spirit, that there might be abundance of fruits for his satisfaction. The way she presseth this petition is very kindly, tho' the words be short. 1. She presseth it from the relation she had to him, Let my Beloved (saith she) come: This makes her request and invitation warm and kindly. 2. From the kind of the fruits; they are pleasant fruits, that is, delectable in themselves, and acceptable to him. But, 3. Lest this should derogate from him, and arrogate to her self, she adds his pleasant fruits: They are his, and that makes them pleasant, so that he cannot but accept them; they are his, being purchased by him, wrought by him, kept in life by him: Tho' he hath made me the garden, saith she, wherein they grow (and the garden, as it hath weeds, is hers) yet all the good fruits, in so far as any of them are to be found in me, are his: In sum, all my desire is this, (1.) To be fruitful; Then, (2.) To have Christ's company, shewing himself pleased and present with me. Observe, 1. Whatever believers have, they neither will, nor can rest upon it; nay, not in the most eminent measures of holiness attainable here-away, without Christ's presence and company. 2. Fruitfulness and liveliness help and contribute much to the enjoyment of Christ's manifestations, John 14. 21, 23. 3. Believers, that aim seriously at the exercise of grace in themselves, may confidently invite Christ to come, and may expect his presence. 4. All believers fruits, even when quickned by the Spirit, are Christ's. 5. This would be acknowledged; and when we are most fruitful, we would look on our fruits, not as our own, but as his still. 6. Christ will feed or delight in nothing, but what is his own, and is acknowledged by his people to be so: And there can nothing, which he will accept of, be set before him but such. 7. Believers end and design, in pursuing liveliness and fruitfulness, is not, and ought not so much to be their own satisfaction, and the feeding of themselves, as the satisfaction of Christ, and the pleasing of him: for, that is his eating his pleasant fruits; which is the Bride's great desire and design, when she calls for the north and south-wind, to blow upon her garden.

## C H A P. V.

## BRIDEGROOM.

Verse 1. *I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse, I have gathered my myrrhe with my spice, I have eaten my honycomb with my hony, I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.*

**T**His chapter hath four parts, according to the parties that successively speak. In the first part, *verse 1.* Christ speaks: And that it is he who speaks, doth at the first reading appear; they are kindly words, well becoming him, and are the answer of her suit in the former words; and so depend on them (for the division of this Song, as also of other scriptures, into chapters, not being done by the penmen of the holy Ghost, but by the translators, is not to be stuck on where there is no question in the matter.) She desired him, *verse last of the former chapter, to come*; and now, in this *verse, Behold, I am come*, saith he, &c. In it we have, *1st*, His yielding to *come*. *2dly*, His carriage when he is come, as to himself: And also his intimation of both. *3dly*, His invitation to others, which may be also a part of his carriage when come, taken up in three. 1. He makes himself welcome; and, 2. Others. 3. He intimates it.

The title being spoken of formerly, the first thing is, *I am come into my garden* (as thou desired) *my sister, &c.* Hence observe, 1. Christ hath particular and peculiar ways of coming to his people, and of nearness with them, even as he hath of withdrawing from them. 2. There are some peculiar times, wherein he is more near than at other times. 3. Sometimes he will not only draw near to his people, but let them know he is near, and put them out of doubt that he is *come*.

Again, If we look to this as the answer of the former prayer, we will see, 1. Christ is easily invited and prevailed with to come to his people; and sometimes there will not be long betwixt their prayer and his answer, it is the very next word. 2. Few words may be an effectual prayer to Christ (as the former suit was) a breathing or sigh will not be rejected by him, where sincerity is. 3. Christ will sometimes not only answer prayer in the thing sought, but he will intimate, and let his people know that he hath answered it.

More particularly, we may consider the answer, 1. As it agrees with her prayer. 2. As it seems defective. 3. As it is beyond it.

*First*, It agrees fully to her last suit; she prayed *he would come and eat*, here comes

*comes and eats.* *Obs.* Christ will carve and shape out sometimes his answer, even according to his peoples desires, as if they had the power of prescribing their own answers. For, when our prayers make for our good, Christ will alter nothing in them, but will grant them in the very terms in which they are put up.

*Again,* I say, there seems to be somewhat defective, there is no return recorded of the first suit for liveliness; and her drousie, lazy case, *ver.* 2, 3. gives ground to think, that that petition was not as yet answered. *Obs.* 1. Christ may be particular in answering one petition of the same prayer, when yet he may for a time suspend an answer to another, in itself as acceptable to him. *Yea,* 2. He may answer the last prayer, and seem to pass over somewhat formerly fought for.

*Finally,* Compare this answer with her last suit, he doth more than she required; for, she desired him only to *come and eat*, but *comes, eats, gathers, &c.* Christ will often stuff in more in the answer, than was in the desire of his people; and will do *above what they asked or thought*, Eph. 3. 20.

*Next,* His carriage (as to his own satisfaction) is in three steps, 1. *I have gathered my myrrhe, with my spice:* Myrrhe and spice signify (as hath been often said) the graces that grow in believers, who are this garden: *His gathering of them* is his pulling (to say so) and dressing of them, as gardeners do their herbs and fruits, for making them useful; here, ere he eat he gathers, signifying, that as the spices are his, so he must prepare them for himself: She cannot prepare what provision Christ gives her, till he do it; she cannot put forth to exercise the grace she hath received, till he breathe on it.

*2dly,* *I have eaten my hony-comb with my hony:* When he hath prepared, he eats. By hony-comb and hony, is signified the same thing (as *Chap.* 4. *ver.* 11.) because as that was savory and wholesom food in these days and places, so are believers graces a feast to Christ.

*3dly,* *I have drunk my wine with my milk:* Milk was for nourishing, wine for refreshing; Christ mentions drinking of both, to shew, how abundantly he was satisfied, and fully feasted, both for meat and drink; and how heartily he entertained himself on it, as a friend that thinks himself very welcome. Consider here, 1. Meat and drink are mentioned: Christ will not want entertainment where he is; he will invite and treat himself, where he gets welcome: Where Christ gets welcome, he will never complain of the want of fare, he hath there a feast. 2. He accepts all heartily; as Christ is easily invited, so is he cheerful and pleasant company: Where he comes, he takes what there is to give him, he is not sour and ill to please. 3. There is *myrrhe* and *spice*, *milk* and *hony* and *wine*; which is not only to shew that there are diversities of graces, but that Christ casts at nothing of grace that is found

found in his people, he takes the *milk* as well as the *wine*; he makes much of the weaker grace, as well as of the most lively. 4. He *gathers* and *eats*: As Christ provides food for himself, so (to speak with reverence) he is his own Cook; none can dress dishes for Christ, but himself. 5. Where he gets the most serious invitation to come, there may be much unpreparedness for him when he comes, until he right it, and prepare his own entertainment himself. 6. Though things be not prepared for him, yet sometimes he will not suspend his coming on that, nor will it marr his cheerfulness in his carriage, when he comes and is made welcome; He *dresseth* and *eateth*. 7. He intimates all this: Sometimes Christ may be well-pleased with believers, and be feasting himself on their graces, and yet they not discern it, nor believe it, until he intimate it, and make it known to them: And therefore, that their joy may be full, he graciously condescends now and then to put them upon the knowledge of it, and persuades their hearts of it.

The last thing is his invitation to his friends to eat with him, which is pressed, (1.) By kindly compellations, *Friends and Beloved*. (2.) By three words, *eat*, *drink*, and that *abundantly*. By *Friends and Beloved*, are understood believers, there are none other capable of these titles; and it was she that prayed, that is here understood by *Friends and Beloved*, and so he answers her. Hence we see, the believer is Christ's friend, as *Abraham*, *Jam.* 2. 23. and *Lazarus*, *John* 11. 11. were called. It imports, 1<sup>st</sup>, A privilege on the believer's part, to be admitted to a special league of friendship with him, when others are slaves or enemies. 2<sup>dly</sup>, A special friendliness in Christ's carriage to them; familiarly, freely telling them all his mind, so far as is needful for them to know, *John* 15. 15. and lovingly manifesting himself to them, as one doth to his friend. 3<sup>dly</sup>, It holds out a duty lying on the believer, to carry friendly to Christ and them that are his, *John* 15. 14. A man that hath friends *must shew himself friendly* (*Prov.* 18. 24.) to them: And seeing he trusts them, and expects no ill from them, they would be, like Christ's friends, answerable to their trust. They are also *beloved*, the title that the husband gives the wife, for evidencing special love: All Christ's friends are beloved, and believers are (whatever they be as to their desert, or in the eyes of men) both friends and beloved: No friend hath such bowels for his friends, as Christ hath for his friends. Friends and beloved are in the plural, 1. To shew he excludes no believer, but includes all; and that with the same seriousness he invites and makes them all welcome to feast with him, whether they be strong or weak. 2. Because his mercy to one may be cheering to many, and he allows and would have others of his people to be cheerful, because of his kindness and mercy manifest to one.

His intertaining of them is held out in three words. *First, Eat*; that de-

clares his desire to have believers partaking with him in the soul-refreshing blessings of his purchase, by their reflecting act of faith comforting themselves in the privileges, promises and mercies allowed on them. *Obs.* 1. The same feast is a feast to Christ and believers both. 2. Where he is cheerful, they should be so also. The *second* word is, *drink*: He drinks, that is, satisfies himself as fully feasted, to wit, with the graces of his people (such is the complacency he hath in them, when he stirs them up to any liveliness of exercise) and he allows them in this case to be refreshed, satisfied and feasted also: It becomes them to drink when he drinks, and bids them drink. The *third* word is, *drink abundantly*: That shews the largeness of his allowance, and heartiness of his welcome, as a gladson host, so cherishes he his guests; and all this is to be understood spiritually, of the joy and comfort which he allows on his people, even to be *filled with the Spirit*, in opposition to wine, *Eph.* 5. 18. which is more satisfying, cheering and refreshing to the inner-man, than wine is to the body. The scope and dependence points out these things, 1. There is much notable soul-refreshing to be had in Christ's company; wherever he is, there is a feast, *Rev.* 3. 20. 2. He allows his people largely to share of it; yea, it is his will that all should liberally improve this allowance, he willeth it. 3. If your joy run in a spiritual channel, there cannot be excess in it, if it were to be drunken with it, so as to forget our poverty, and to remember our misery no more. 4. Christ is never fully satisfied at his own feast, till he get his friends feasted and cheered also: He eats not his morsels alone, but is desirous to communicate his good things, according as they are communicable. 5. Christ's preparing and dressing, is rather for the welcoming of his friends, than for himself. I have *gathered, eat ye*, saith he. 6. Christ is a most heartson distributor to others, and intertainer of his friends: There needs be no sparing to eat where he invites. 7. Believers, even Christ's friends, needs invitation, by reason of unbelief, sense of unworthiness (which makes them sinfully modest) and the dulness of their spiritual appetite; and therefore they will need (to say so) bidding and intreaty oftentimes to eat their meat, and to cheer themselves in him, and he will not let them want that. 8. Wherever Christ is present, there is a feast with him for them that are in his company; he sups with them, and makes them sup with him; and all is his own, and of his own dressing. 9. It is a gift of Christ's mercy, not only to have grounds of consolation, but to be inabled to comfort our selves in these grounds; (as, in outward things, it is one gift to have, and another to have the cheerful use of that which we have) for the believer may have the one when he wants the other: and when he hath the one, to have the other added, is a double mercy, as the exhortation, *eat, drink, &c.* imports. 10. It is not every one who is Christ's friend, nor every

every one that hath that honour to comfort and feast themselves with him; it is a privilege that is peculiar to them who are his freinds indeed.

### B R I D E.

Verse 2. *I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.*

From verse 2. unto the ninth (which is the second part of the chapter) the Bride speaks, and sets down a very complex piece of her condition, which we take up in these three. 1. Her condition is shortly set down. 2. The mutual carriage of the Bridegroom and Bride are recorded; wherein (as it were) grace and loving kindness in him, and unkindness in her, are wrestling together for a time. 3. The out-gate, and the way how she attained it, by several steps on his side, and hers, are particularly insisted on from verse 4. with what followed thereupon.

Her case is in short, *I sleep, but my heart waketh*; or (as it is in the original) *I sleeping, my heart waking*: It is made up of contraries, and seeming paradoxes; she is distinguished from her heart, and the sleeping of the one is opposed to the waking of the other: Both this sleeping and waking are spiritually to be understood; the first signifies a ceasing from spiritual duties, or a suspension of the acting of spiritual life, by raising of some inward corruption, that dulls and binds up the spiritual senses, as in natural sleep the external senses are dulled and bound up: So, 1 *Theff.* 5. 6. and *Rom.* 13. 11. *Let us not sleep, but watch and be sober.* This is a further degree of spiritual distemper, beyond what was chap. 3. 1, 2. where she was *on bed*, and yet *seeking*; but here she *sleeps* and *lies still*, as we see ver. 3. It imports, 1<sup>st</sup>, An interruption of liveliness and actual exercising of grace. 2<sup>dly</sup>, An indisposition and laziness in the frame of the spirit, added to that. 3<sup>dly</sup>, A sort of acquiescing and resting securely in that indisposition, with a lothness to stir and be interrupted, such as useth to be in the bodily sleep, and such as appears to be here from the following verse: It is sleepiness, or to be given to sleep, such as the sluggard is subject unto, who sleepeth excessively, and out of due time. This *I* that sleepeth, is the believer, but considered in so far as unregenerate; as, *Rom.* 7. 18. *I know, that in me (that is, in my flesh) there dwelleth no good thing*: For, as the believer hath two different natures, which have opposite actings; so are they considered as two different persons. Hence in that, *Rom.* 7. *I, yet not I, &c.* by which Paul as renewed, is distinguished

from himself as unrenewed. By *waking*, is understood some liveliness and sensibleness, or at least life, in opposition to the former deadness and dulness; as, *Rom. 13. 11. It is high time to awake*: And, *1 Thess. 5. 6. Let us watch and be sober*; which is opposite to that spiritual drowsiness, wherein we are scarce at our selves. *My heart*, looks to the renewed part, which is often called the *spirit*, that lusteth against the *flesh*; as, *Gal. 5. 17. and the law in the mind*, *Rom. 7. circumcision in the heart*, *Rom. 2. 25. the new heart in the covenant*, *Ezek. 36*. In sum, it is this, Things are not right with me, and indisposition to duty, or lifelessness in it, is great (as it is with one that is in a sleep) yet even then there is some inward stirring of life, appearing in conviction of judgment, challenges, purposes, protestations of the inward-man, against this dead and lazy frame, as not delighting in it, but displeased with it, &c. wherein the new nature wrestles and yields not, nor gives itself leave to consent to it, although it can act nothing, at least in a lively way, under this condition: Thus she is sleeping, because she acts nothing; yet, the heart is waking, because it is kept from being involved in that security, though it be bound up, and overpowered with corruption, that it cannot win to act according to the light and inclination that it hath within. Hence observe,

1. That the believer hath two different and opposite natures and principles within him, leading him divers ways; the carnal and sleeping *I*, and the renewed and waking heart.
2. They may be both at one time acting oppositely, the *one lusting against the other*, *Gal. 5. 17.*
3. Sometimes corruption may prevail far over believers that have grace, and lay them (though not quite dead, yet) fast asleep for a time, and marr in a great measure the exercise of their grace.
4. Believers, at their lowest, have life in them, and (by reason of their new nature) are not totally and fully involved in their security and backsliding conditions.
5. There may be some inward apprehending of our hazard, and dangerous condition, when it is very sad and low, so as believers may know it is not right with them, and yet (as it is here with the Bride) may continue under it, and lie still.
6. Spiritual laziness and security is incident to the strongest believers: The *wise virgins* may *slumber and sleep*, *Matth. 25.*
7. Yea, after the greatest manifestations, and often on the back of the fullest intimations of Christ's love, and the most sweet invitations they have from him, and most joyful feastings with him, they may be thus overtaken, as the words preceeding bear out: The disciples fell in this distemper, that same night after the Lord's supper.
8. Believers may fall over and over again in the same condition of sinful security, even after they have been roused and raised out of it; as this, being compared with *chap. 3.* will clear.
9. The more frequently believers (or any other) relapse in the same sin, they will go the greater length readily in it, and, by falling more dangerously, be

more

more hardly recovered than formerly : Now she sleeps ; and when put at, will not rise, but shifts, which is a further step than was *chap. 3.* 10. Lazy fits of indisposition, and omissions of duty, do more frequently steal in upon believers, than positive out-breakings and commissions ; and they are more ready to please themselves in them, and to ly still under them. 11. Believers should be so acquaint with their own condition, as to be able to tell how it is with them, whether as to their unrenewed or renewed part ; so here, *I sleep, but my heart waketh.* 12. Believers, in taking up their condition, would advert both to their corruptions and graces ; and, in their reckoning, would put a distinction betwixt these two, otherwise they will misreckon on the one side or other : They would not reckon themselves wholly by the actings of nature, lest they disclaim their graces ; nor yet by their renewed part, lest they forget their unrenewed nature ; but they would attribute every effect in them to its own cause and principle, where-from it proceeds. 13. It is good for a believer, when overcome with corruption, and captivate by it, to disallow and disown it from the heart, as not allowing what they do, and to present this to God, as a protestation entred against their prevailing lusts. In some sense, a believer may both condemn himself as sinful, and absolve himself as delighting in the law of God, at one and the same time ; and where he allows not his corruption, but positively dissents from it, he may disclaim it as not being his deed.

This being her case, follows the Bridegroom's carriage, which is expressed in the rest of *verse 2.* and her carriage (implied only in this verse) is more fully expressed, *verse 3.* His carriage holds out the great design he drives, and that is to have access to her, and to have her roused up : For attaining of which, 1<sup>st</sup>, He doth something, and that is, *knocks* at the door. 2<sup>dly</sup>, He endures and suffers *dew* and *drops* in the *cold night*, and yet doth not give over. 3<sup>dly</sup>, He speaks, and useth many perswasive arguments for that end : All which she observes, and yet lies still. It is in sum, as if a loving husband, that is shut out by a lazy, yet a beloved wife, would knock, call, and waiting on still, use many arguments to perswade her to open ; so doth our spiritual Bridegroom wait upon believers, whom he loves, to have them brought again to the lively exercise of faith in him, and to a frame of spirit meet for communion with him. To take the words as they ly, there is, (1.) The Bride's observation (as it were in her sleep) of the Beloved's calling at the door. (2.) There is set down his call. (3.) The arguments he useth for prevailing with her. By *knocking* is understood the inward touches of the word upon the conscience, when the efficacy of the Spirit goes alongst, which raps at the Bride's heart, as knocking doth at a door, and is the mean of awaking her from spiritual sleep, as knocking at a door is a mean of awaking from

from bodily sleep: So it is, *Rev. 3. 20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock*; in which sense the word is compared to a *hammer*, *Jer. 23. 29.* It takes in these three, *First*, A seriousness in him that so knocks. *Secondly*, A power and efficacy in the word, that some-way affects the heart, and moves it. *Thirdly*, It implies some effect it hath upon the heart, as being somewhat affected with that touch; therefore it is his voice or word, that not only calleth, but knocketh, implying some force it had upon her. By *voice* is understood the word, as *chap. 2. 8, 10.* yet, as backed with the Spirit and power, and as *commended* thereby to the *conscience*, *1 Cor. 2. 4.* and convincingly demonstrated to be the very voice of Christ; yet, so as rods inward and outward, and other means, may have their own place, being made use of by him, yet still according to the word. His great end, for which he knocks, is in that word *open*: which, as it implies her case, that her heart was in a great measure shut upon him, and that by some carnal indisposition he was kept out of it, and was not made welcome; so it requires the removing of all that stopt his way, and the casting open of the heart by faith to receive his word, and by love to receive himself: And in these two especially, this opening doth consist, *1st*, In the exercise of faith, *Acts 16. 14.* The Lord *opened the heart of Lydia*; and that is expounded, *she gave heed unto these things which Paul spoke.* *2dly*, An enlarging and warming of the affections towards him (which ever comprehends the former) as, *Psal. 81. 10. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it*: What that is, the refusal following declares, *My people would not hear* (that is, *believe*) *Israel would none of me, or loved not me* (as the words in the Original import) they cared not for me, they desired me not, and would not quit their idols; as in the foregoing words, *verse 9.* is mentioned. *3dly*, There resulteth from these two a mutual familiarity, as *Rev. 3. 20. If any Man will open, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me.* This opening, then, imports the removing of every thing that marred fellowship with Christ, and the doing of every thing that might dispose for enjoying of it, as *awaking, rising, &c.* all which follows in the *4. verse*; and while he commands to open, he calls for the entertaining of fellowship with him, which now is by her drowsiness interrupted. Which two parts of the verse put together, hold forth, *1.* That Christ's own Bride may shut the door on him, and so make a sad separation betwixt him and her. *2.* Christ's word is the great and ordinary external mean, whereby he knocks at mens hearts, and which he makes use of for begetting faith in them. *3.* That, in a believer's secure condition, there will be sometimes more than ordinary convictions, stirrings and motions by the word. *4.* That the word of God, backed with power, will reach the securest heart, and affect it. *5.* That believers will discern Christ's voice and call, when their condition is very low. *6.* It will be refreshful to them to have

have him knocking: she looks on it as a kindly thing, even to have his knock bearing-in convictions, challenges, or somewhat else on her; tho' it please not her flesh, yet, in as far as she is renewed, it will be *the voice of her Beloved* to her. 7. Christ hath a way of following his own, even when they are become secure; and sometimes, then, will make his call, challenges or convictions pursue more hotly and pressingly than at other times. 8. When Christ knocketh and presseth hardest, it is for our own good, and it is a token of love in him to do so; for, there is nothing more deplorable, than when he saith to one under indisposition, and in an evil case, *Let him alone*. 9. When Christ calls by his word, it is then our duty to open to him, and to receive him; and this can no more be slighted without sin, than prayer, mortification, and other commanded duties, can be neglected or slighted without sin. 10. Christ may call very pressingly, and his word may have some work on the conscience and affections of hearers, and they be some-way affected with it, and yet the word be rejected, and the heart not made open to Christ; as here she *sleeps* still notwithstanding; and the following verse confirms it. 11. There are some operations of the Spirit, which tho' they be more than a common work on the generality of hearers, yet are not saving, and may be, and often are, even by believers frustrate for a time, and by others for ever; for, this *knocking* gets a refusal, *verse 3*. So deceiving, beguiling and dangerous are common motions to rest on, when the finger of gracious Omnipotency is not applied, as *verse 4*. 12. Christ's design, when he knocks fastest, is friendly; and yet it sometimes saith, things are not right: This is the end of all his knocking and speaking to a people, and then it is plainest when he speaks most powerfully.

*Secondly*, The way how Christ presseth this, is, *1st*, By shewing who he was; it is *me*, *open to me*: There can be no greater commendation given to Christ, nor weightier argument used for him, than to make it known, that it is he, the Husband, Lord, &c. whose the house is, and to whom entry by right from the wife, ought to be given. *2dly*, By giving her love titles, and claiming her as his, in many relations, as, *my sister, love, dove*; and (which was not mentioned before) *undefiled* is added, that is, my perfect one, or upright sincere one, as it is often rendred. These titles given now, and so many at once, shew, 1. That believers, when secure, have very much need of the Spirit to rouse and stir them up: Souls are not easily perswaded to receive Christ. 2. There is wonderful love in Christ, that condescends so to entreat his people, when in such a secure case: Even then he changes not her name, no more than if all things were in good case; for, our relation to him depends not on our case. 3. Christ will sometimes very lovingly deal, even with secure souls in his way, for obtaining entry, and perswading them to open to him, and sometimes will apply the most refreshful gospel-offers and invitations,

tations, and use the most kindly compellations for that end. 4. Christ sometimes will overlook the lazy distempers of his people, and not always chide with them for these, but give them their wonted stiles, notwithstanding. 5. The kind dealing of Christ to his people, will ever prove love to be on his side, but will not always prove, that the persons, so dealt with, are presently in a good condition; for, he may accept their persons, and speak comfortably as to their state, altho' he approve not their present condition, as here. 6. We may see, that Christ's love is not founded on our merit, nor is up and down, according to our variable disposition; but he prevents both, in his dealing with his people. These titles being made use of, as a motive to answer his call, and to open to him, shew, 1. That the perswasion of Christ's love in souls, is a main thing to make way for their entertaining of him. 2. That it is a shame for a believer, so beloved of Christ, to hold him without at the door, when he knocketh to be in. Grace would make a heart to blush, and in a manner look it out of countenance, that would refuse his kindness.

The third and great argument, is, *For my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night*: Very shame might prevail with the wife, when the husband useth such an argument as this: It is even as if a husband, standing long without doors in a tempestuous night, should use this motive with his wife, to perswade her to let him in, It will be very prejudicial and hurtful to my health, if thou open not unto me; for, I have stood long without: This may, no doubt, be presumed to be a very strong and prevalent argument with a loving wife; yet, it gets but a poor and very unsuitable answer from the Bride. By *dew, drops and night-time*, are understood, afflictions, external crosses and lowness: So, *Daniel* 4. that king is said to be *wet with the dew of heaven* in his low condition, as having no house to shelter himself in, but being obnoxious to all changes and injuries of weather: and *Jacob* mentions it as a part of the toilsom labour, that he had with *Laban*, *I did endure the heat of the sun in the day, and the cold in the night*; that is, he was ever watchful, and spared not himself, for the hurt of either day or night: Here Christ's spiritual sufferings also may come in, whereby he made himself obnoxious to the Father's wrath and curse, that he might have access to communion with his people; and the account that he hath of being kept out by his people, as a new piece of his suffering, or as a painful reviving of the remembrance of his old sufferings. The scope is to shew, that as a kindly husband will so deal with a beloved wife, and expect to prevail, being put to this strait; so doth Christ with his people, being no less desirous of a room in their hearts, and being as much troubled by their unbelief, as any man is, when put to stand in the cold night, under dew and rain, at his own door. This way of arguing saith, 1. That the believer, as such, loves and respects Christ, and would not have him

him suffering, as a kind wife would be loth to hazard her husband's health. 2. That Christ expounds her so, even when she is lazy and keeps him out, otherwise this argument would be of no force, nor would he have used it: He will see much evil (to speak so) ere he notice it in a believer; and is not suspicious, even when occasions are given. 3. Believers are often exceeding unanswerable to the relation that is betwixt Christ and them, and may suffer Christ to stand long waiting without. 4. It affects Christ much (and is a suffering to him, and a kind of putting him to open shame, and a crucifying again of the Son of God) to be kept out of hearts by unbelief: And there can be no pardonable sin, that hath more and greater aggravations than this; for, it is cruelty to kind Jesus Christ. 5. Believers, even when Christ is in good terms with them, may fall in this fault. 6. Christ is a most affectionate suiter, and patient husband, that thus waits on, even when he is affronted, and gives not over his kind suit: Who would bear with this, that he bears with and passeth by, and continues kindly notwithstanding? Many strange and uncouth things are comported with, and overlooked betwixt him and believers, without hearing, that the world could not digest. 7. Our Lord Jesus hath not spared himself, nor shunned sufferings, for doing of his people good: *Jacob's* care of, and suffering for *Laban's* flocks, and *Nebuchadnezzar* his humiliation, was nothing to this. 8. The love of Christ is manifested in nothing more for his people, than in his sufferings for them, and in his patient on-waiting, to have the benefits thereof applied to them. 9. Christ's sufferings, and his affectionate way of pleading from them, should melt hearts in love to him, and in desire of union with him, and will make the refusal exceeding sinful and shameful, where it is given: O so strong arguments as Christ hath, to be in on the hearts of his people! and how many things are there, to plead for that?

Verse 3. *I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?*

The Bride's answer is here set down, but O how unsuitable to that which was his carriage! He stands, she lies; he without, she within; he calls friendly; she ungrately shifts it, at best: As if a wife should answer her husband so calling, *I am now in bed, and have put off my clothes, and washen my feet*, and so have composed my self to rest, I cannot rise, it would hurt me to rise: So doth the Bride thus unreasonably, and absurdly put back this fair call, upon a two-fold shift, both which are spiritually to be understood, as the sleep and opening, formerly mentioned, were. In it consider, (1.) The answer. (2.) The manner of it. (3.) The particular grounds which she layeth down to build it on. And, (4.) The faults of this reasoning of hers, which at first may be con-

cluded to be unsound. The answer, in general, is a denial, as the event clears; and it is like that, *Luke 11. 7. I am in bed, and my children with me, trouble me not, &c.* Yea, how can I put them on? These words (being the interrogation, not of one doubting, but of one shifting) imply a vehement denial, as if it were a most unreasonable and impossible thing, for her to give obedience to what was called for; Which shews, that Christ may get most indiscreet refusals to his fairest calls: Which refusal is thus aggregated, 1<sup>st</sup>, It was against most powerful and plain means: The most powerful external ordinances may be frustrate; even Christ himself in his word, when he preached in the days of his flesh, had not always success. 2<sup>dly</sup>, It was against her light, she knew it was Christ's call: Even believers may sit challenges against their light, and sin wittingly through the violence of tentations, though not wholly willingly. 3<sup>dly</sup>, She had invited him by prayer, *chapter 4. 16.* yet now lies still: Which lets us see, 1. That believers, in their carriage, are often unsuitable to their prayers: There may be, and is often a great discrepancy betwixt these. And, 2. Often believers may be more desirous of an opportunity of meeting with Christ, or any other mercy, when they want it, than watchful to make the right use of it, when they have gotten it.

Her way is to give some reasons for her refusal, as if she could do no otherwise, and were not to be blamed so much for her shifting of Christ; as the words, *how can I, &c.* import. Observe, 1. The flesh will be broody and quick, in inventing shifts for maintaining of it self, even against the clearest convictions and duties. 2. It is ill to debate or reason a clear duty; often Satan and the flesh gets advantage by it. 3. Folks are oft-times very partial in examining their own reasons, and are hardly put from their own grounds once laid, altho' they be not solid; and the most foolish reasons will be convincing to a spiritual sluggard, who, in fostering his ease, seems wiser to himself, than one who can render the most concludent arguments, and strongest reasons to the contrary, *Prov. 26. 16.* The opening of the particular reasons will clear this; The first is, *I have put off my coat*, and the conclusion is, *How can I put it on!* Putting off the clothes, is an evidence of mens betaking themselves to rest, as keeping them on, is a sign of watching; as in *Nehemiah 4. 23. None of us put off clothes, save to washing*; Hence keeping on of the clothes is borrowed, to set out spiritual watchfulness, and hiding of spiritual nakedness, as *Rev. 16. 15. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked*: And, on the contrary, putting off of clothes, signifieth not only a spiritual drowsiness, but a high degree of it; as having put off, and fallen from that tenderness and watchfulness in her walk, wherewith she was clothed, *chapter 4. 11.* and is now somewhat settled in her carnal ease and security. From this she argueth, *How shall I put it on?* The force of the reason may be three ways considered,

sidered, 1. As it imports a difficulty in the thing, how shall I do it? O it is difficult! 2. As it imports an averſneſs to it, in her ſelf: It ſtands againſt her heart, as a ſeeming unreaſonable thing, as *Gen. 39. How ſhall I do this great wickedneſs?* &c. 3. A ſort of ſhame may be in it, I am now out of a poſture, and I think ſhame to riſe, and to be ſeen: Which ſhews, 1<sup>ſt</sup>, That it is hard to riſe one that hath fallen into ſecurity. 2<sup>dly</sup>, To lazy ſouls every thing looks like an inſuperable difficulty; their way to duty is as *an hedge of thorns*, *Prov. 15. 19.* and *there is a lion in their ſtreets*, and ſometimes, as it were, even in the houſe-floor, when any duty is preſſed upon them, that would rob them of their carnal eaſe, *Prov. 26. 13.* and *22. 13.* 3<sup>dly</sup>, It is much for one, in a ſecure frame, to wreſtle with their own indiſpoſition; it is a wearineſs then to take *the hand out of the boſom*, *Prov. 26. 15.* 4<sup>thly</sup>, It is not a commendable ſhamefaſtneſs, but muſt needs be a very ſinful modeſty, that keeps one from duty: It was indeed more ſhameful to ly ſtill, than to riſe.

Her ſecond ground is of the ſame nature, *I have waſhed my feet*: waſhing the feet, fitted and prepared for reſt; mens feet, in theſe countries, being, by walking bare-footed, ſome way ſtiffened, beaten and bruised, which by waſhing were eaſed and reſreſhed; as we may ſee, *Gen. 18. 19.* in *Abraham* and *Lot's* carriage to the angels, ſuppoſing them to be men: So here, it is, I have fitted and compoſed my ſelf for reſt, as being wearied with the painfulneſs of holy duties; and now ſhe cannot endure to ſtir her ſelf toward theſe, as if that would again defile her: In which reaſoning, there are theſe faults, 1. That ſhe doth at all offer to debate a clear duty, this makes way for the ſnare. 2. That ſhe interprets the ſtudy of holineſs, and communion with Chriſt, to be a trouble, and carnal ſecurity to be an eaſe: There will be ſtrange miſrepresentations, ſometimes, both of our faults and failings, and of Chriſt's worth and excellency, which have much influence on our deadneſs and ſinful diſtempers. 3. She makes one ſinful action the cauſe of her continuance in another: There is often a connexion amongſt ſins, and one draws on another; the premiſſes, that the fleſh lays down as principles, will ſtill bear concluſions like themſelves: It is unſound and unſafe reaſoning from theſe. 4. That which ſhould ſtir and perſwade her to riſe, *to wit*, that ſhe was not right, ſhe makes a motive of it, to ſtrengthen her ſelf in her lazy inclination to ly ſtill. Carnal ſenſe draws concluſions moſt unreaſonable in every thing, and tends ſtill to foſter it ſelf; whereas, faith and tenderneſs would reaſon the quite contrary. 5. She puts too honeſt a name upon her ſecurity, and calleth it the waſhing of her feet, which was indeed the polluting of them: Fairing and plaſtering over our own evils, is a great foſtering of ſecurity, yet too common; as to call unbelief humility, preſumption faith, ſecurity peace, &c. We give to ſin the name of virtue, and then without a challenge

maintain it ; which is a degree of putting darkness for light, and bitter for sweet, and a sort of calling evil good, which brings under the hazard of the pronounced wo, *Isa.* 5. 20. 6. She fails here, that she expects more ease in lying still, than in opening to Christ, whereas it is but the flesh that is troubled at Christ's presence ; but solid satisfaction is only to be had in his company : Flesh hath ever secret fears of Christ's company, as if it were intolerable, irksome and troublesome to be a Christian in earnest ; and these whisperings, and wicked suggestions of the flesh, may have sometimes too much weight with a believer. 7. She mistakes Christ's word, which pressed that he might be admitted, who was a most loving husband, and had suffered so much in waiting for entry ; but, she states the matter otherwise, if she that was at ease should trouble her self, that so the shift might seem reasonable : Tho' Christ be not directly and downright refused, and the heart dare not under convictions adventure on that, yet, by opposing respect to our selves to him, and by shifting to open to him when he knocks, many are guilty upon the matter of refusing and slighting Christ himself, when they think they slight not him, but would only shun something that is troublesome to themselves. These words are not so to be looked on, as if explicitly believers would so argue ; but that in their lazy and drowsie spiritual distempers there is such arguing on the matter, and such or such like shifts prevail often to make them keep out Christ, when directly they dare not refuse him : which doth evidence the power and subtilty of corruption, even in a believer, and the greatness of the love of Christ that passeth it by.

If it should be asked, Why is this sinful distemper of hers registrate, and put upon record ? We say, 1. For her own good : It is profitable for believers to mind and record their miscarriages to Christ, as well as his kind dealings with them. 2. It is for the honour of the Bridegroom, whose love appears and shines most brightly, when it is set for-against her miscarriage : Believers would acknowledge their infirmities and failings, as well as their mercies and graces, when it may make to the Bridegroom's commendation. 3. It is for the edification of others : Often one believer's infirmities, through God's blessing, may prove edifying to others, for making them watchful, and bidding them stand, and sustaining of them when fallen ; the infirmities of Job, under his sore trials, have strengthened many, as his patience hath convinced them.

In sum, this reasoning is indirect and frivolous, shewing, in the general, 1. That men incline to cover their secret misregard of Christ, as if it were rather tenderness to themselves, than indiscreet disrespect to him, yet he expounds it so : As, *Math.* 22. 5. when they alledge it as a necessary excuse, that they behoved to wait on their farm and merchandise, he interprets it, they

they made light of the invitation to the marriage of the King's Son. 2. It shews, that the shifts, whereby men put back Christ, are exceeding frivolous: There can be no strong nor relevant reason alledged for our slighting Christ, and for our ruining our selves in slighting of him in the offers of his grace in the Gospel; altho' corrupt nature exercise and rack its invention, to find out reasons to plead our excuse, yet, when such reasonings are examined, they will not abide the trial. 3. That, when mens hearts are in a declining frame, very trivial and weightless arguments will prevail to make them keep out Christ; and, for as trivial as they are, they would prevail even with believers, did not grace refute them, and make way for his entry into the soul.

Verse 4. *My Beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.*

There follows, in this fourth verse, a second step of Christ's carriage, with the effects of it: He gives not over, but puts in his finger, and powerfully makes application to her, by a saving work of the Spirit upon her heart, which hath the desired and designed effect following upon it; she riseth and openeth.

In this we have, 1. The mean applied and made use of. 2. The manner of application. (for that the worker is the Beloved himself, is clear) The mean is his *hand*, which in scripture signifieth three things, when attributed to God, 1<sup>st</sup>, His Omnipotency, whereby he doth what he pleaseth, *Exod. 15. 6. Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power*: And, *Exod. 8. 19. it is said, This is the finger of God*, that is, his power. 2<sup>dly</sup>, It is taken for the Spirit, or the common operations of the Spirit, whereby miracles, beyond the power of man, are wrought; as by comparing *Math. 12. 28.* with *Luke 11. 20.* will be clear. 3<sup>dly</sup>, It is taken for the saving work of the Spirit, applied for the working of faith in the elect at the first, or renewing and confirming of it afterward in believers; as, *Acts 11. 21. The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed*. This is it which is pointed at, *Isa. 53. 1. where, Who hath believed? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?* are made of equal extent: And so especially it is to be taken here, as the scope clears, to wit, for the immediate powerful work of the Spirit, made use of in the working of faith, as a key is made use of for the opening of a door.

The way of applying this mean, is, *he put in his hand by the hole of the door*: where (following the similitude of a husband standing at a shut door, and not getting entry) he shews what he did, when knocking prevailed not; to wit, he took an effectual way of opening it himself, which is ordinary by putting in the key, or somewhat else, at the hole of the door: So Christ by his Spirit made open the heart, in a kindly native way; not by breaking open, but  
by

by opening ; he indeed having the key by which hearts are opened, even *the key of David, that opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens*, Rev. 3. 7. Which words do shew, 1. That besides the call of the word, and any common conviction that is thereby wrought in the heart, there is, in the conversion of sinners, an immediate, real, powerful and peculiar work of the Spirit that accompanies the word. 2. That the application of this is necessary ; and that men, being now asleep, and dead in sin, cannot without that be stirred and quickned by the most powerful external ordinances, or common operations: Nay, even to the believer's reviving from his backlidden and drowsie case, this work of omnipotency is needful. 3. This work of the Spirit is effectual, and, when peculiarly applied by Christ, cannot be frustrate ; for, he *puts in his hand*, and the effect follows. 4. Although it be a most powerful work, yet it works kindly, and brings about the effect without wronging of the natural faculties of the soul, but makes use of them formally for bringing forth the effect ; as one that openeth a door by the lock, makes use of a key, but doth not hurt nor destroy the lock : There is therefore no inconsistency betwixt Christ's opening and ours ; for, he co-acts not, nor forceth the will, but sweetly determines it, so that it cannot but be willing ; he takes away unwillingness from it, and makes it willing, *Psal. 110. 3.* Christ hath the keys of hearts, and can open and shut at his pleasure, without wronging of them. 5. Grace being the work of a high hand, it cannot be easie to procure welcome to Jesus Christ even amongst believers, and much less with others, who have no principle of grace within to co-operate with Christ. 6. Christ Jesus, as he is a most powerful worker, so is the work of his power most free, sovereign and wonderful ; which clearly appeareth, in that it is applied on the back of such a slighting answer, and not before : Yea, 7. Oftentimes the work of grace surpriseth his own, when they are in a most unsuitable case, and when in respect of their deserving they might have expected the quite contrary : Certainly, we are not obliged to our free-will for our conversion, but to his Spirit ; nor to our predispositions for his applying of it, but to his own grace, who, in his gracious way of dealing with his people, comes over many obstructions, and packs up (to say so) many affronts and injuries.

If any should ask, Why Christ did not apply this work, and put in his hand at first, but suspends it till he had gotten a refusal, and be now at the very withdrawing ? *Ans.* 1. He doth this to shew the sovereignty of grace, that works as well when it will, as on whom it will : Grace must not be limited by us in the manner or time of its working, more than in its work, or subject matter upon which it worketh. 2. By this he discovereth, what believers would be without his grace (and so would teach them to walk humbly) which otherwise had not so well appeared. 3. His wisdom and tender-

tenderneſs appears herein, that he will not withdraw from her, and leave her lifeleſs too; but, ere he awake challenges in her, he will make her lively in the exerciſes of her graces; otherwiſe ſhe might have lyen ſtill in her deadneſs: Chriſt times his operations, his appearings and withdrawings, with much tenderneſs, wiſdom and diſcretion.

This work of the Spirit puts a ſtir in the Bride, which vents it ſelf in four ſteps. 1. *Her bowels are moved.* 2. *She ariſeth.* 3. *Her fingers drop with myrrhe.* 4. *She opens.* All which may be conſidered, either, 1<sup>ſt</sup>, As effects following the work of the Spirit, whereby ſhe is recovered from ſuch a condition: Or, 2<sup>dly</sup>, As duties lying on a believer: Or, 3<sup>dly</sup>, As they hold out the order of the effects wrought by the Spirit. In general, it holds forth, 1. That the work of the Spirit, when it is effectually applied, makes a very great, palpable and univerſal change upon the perſons in whom it works: There is a great difference betwixt the Bride's carriage here, and what it was, *verſe 3.* 2. Altho' it be not absolutely neceſſary, nor ordinary for a believer, to know the inſtant of his converſion; yet, when the change is ſudden, and from an extremity of a ſinful condition, it will be diſcernable, and the fruits following the change will be the more palpable. 3. A believer would endeavour to be clear in the change of his condition; and when this clearneſs is attained by the diſtinct uptaking of the ſeveral fruits of the change, it is very uſeful and profitable for eſtabliſhing the believer in the confidence of his intereſt in Chriſt, and that there is a ſaving change wrought in him: So here, the Bride both aſſerts him to be her Beloved, and, likewise the reality of the change he had wrought in her.

The firſt effect is, *My bowels were moved for him*; which, in ſhort, holds forth the kindly exerciſe of ſerious repentance, affecting and ſtinging (as it were) the very inward bowels, for ſlighting Chriſt ſo long: Which will be cleared by conſidering, 1. What is meant by *bowels*. 2. What by *moving of the bowels*. 3. What that is, *for him*. By *bowels* are underſtood either sorrow, and that in an intenſe degree, as *Job 30. 27. My bowels boiled*; *Lam. 1. 20. My bowels are troubled*; and *Jer. 4. 19. My bowels, my bowels, I am pained at the very heart*: Or, bowels are taken for affection and tender love in the higheſt degree, ſuch as mothers have to the children of their womb, *Philip. 2. 1, 2. If there be any bowels*; and *Philemon, v. 12. Receive him that is my own bowels*. Thus they are taken, *Iſa. 63. 15. Where are thy bowels?* and frequently elſewhere, both in the Old and New Teſtament. By *moving of the bowels* (or ſounding, or making a noiſe, as the word is elſewhere tranſlated, *Iſa. 16. 11. and 63. 15.*) is underſtood a ſenſible ſtirring of the affections, when they begin to ſound, and that kindly, and in a moſt affectionate manner, either ſeverally or jointly; ſuch as is the *turning of the bowels*, *Hos. 1. 1.* and the *troubling*

*the bowels*, Jer. 31. 18, 19, 20. It is even such as is kindly sympathy with persons that are dearly beloved, when any sad change befalls them. It is called the yerning of the bowels, spoken of that mother, 1 *Kings* 3. 26. who was so affected towards her child, out of love to him, that she had rather quit him to the other woman that was not his mother, than see him divided, her bowels were so hot towards him: (another thing than was in any on-looker) It is the same word here, which shews, that this motion of the Bride's bowels proceeded from love to Christ, and from sorrow for wronging of him; which two jumbled her within, and pierced and stounded her to the heart, as a kindly parent useth to be for the death or distress of his only child; which is the character of true repentance, *Zech.* 12. 10, 11. 3dly, *For him*, holds out, 1st, The procuring-cause of this trouble, that it was for wronging of Christ, and the slighting of so kind an husband and friend, that that stounded her at the heart above all, as, *Zech.* 12. 10. *They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn for him.* 2dly, It holds forth the final cause wherefore she was so stirred and moved: It was *for him*, that is, that she might enjoy him; as the word is, *Hos.* 7. 14. *They assemble themselves for corn and wine*, that is, to obtain them. So her bowels were moved *for*, or *after him*, to obtain and enjoy him: And thus, sense of the wrong done to him, in her by-past unkindly carriage to him, and desire to recover him again, so affects her, as if it were the pangs of a travelling woman, till Christ be again formed in her heart. *Observ.* 1. The first work of the Spirit, is, by powerful convictions to beget evangelick repentance in the heart, and to make the soul sensible of by-past failings, *Acts* 2. 37. This, although it be not in time before faith, nor in nature (for, seeing it proceeds from love, it supposeth faith) yet it is the first sensible effect, that sinners (surprised in a sinful condition) are touched with; and it is never separate from, but always joined with the exercise of faith, *Zech.* 12. 10. 2. This work of repentance is necessary to be renewed, even in believers, after their failings, and it is the way by which they recover; Christ's Bride is thus affected, and it becomes them well who have sin, to be deeply moved and afflicted with the sense of it. 3. Where most love to Christ is, and where most sincerity hath been, when a wakening comes, it will be the more sensible, and affect the heart the more thoroughly. Particularly, we may gather, hence, these properties of true repentance, or godly sorrow. 1st, Godly sorrow is no fruit of nature, but is a work and effect of the Spirit of Christ, and a peculiar saving grace, beyond common conviction; and a believer is not the worker of it in himself. 2dly, This sorrow consists most in the inward pangs and stings of the heart, wherein love to Christ, and indignation against our selves, for wronging of him, struggle, and put all within in a stir. 3. True repentance is different from, and beyond convictions and challenges

challenges ( which the Bride had before, when this was wanting in her ) and makes another kind of impression, and a more sensible touch upon the heart and inward bowels : I say not, that it is alway terrible, for that is accidental to it; but sensible it is. *4thly*, Though this godly sorrow affect the heart deeply, yet doth it work kindly, sweetly and affectionately, as a mother's affection warms to her child, or, as a man is troubled for his first-born : Love hath a main influence upon, and goeth alongst in this godly sorrow, both in the rise of it, love kindles this heart-indignation ; and also, in the exercise of it, love to Christ keeps it lively ; and in the manner how it vents it self, it makes it a kindly, and no-torturing or terrible exercise. *5thly*, Nothing more affects a kindly repenting heart, truly touched with godly sorrow, than that it should have sinned against Christ ; its own hazard is not the predominant cause of this sorrow ( she is clear of her interest still ) nor is it any sad event that might follow, which so affects her (though she was not senseless as to these) but it is *for him*, and his cause, and not her own, that she is thus moved : The Spirit's conviction, *John 16. 8.* is, because they *believe not on me*. *6thly*, Considering the words with what follows, *I rose, &c.* and comparing them with what went before, *observe*, That true repentance brings forth always a change in a believer's carriage to the better, in those things by which Christ their Beloved was formerly provoked ; and it doth stir up to universal activeness in the study of holiness : This makes her arise from the laziness in which she formerly was. *7thly*, Consider, That she rests not, till first she open to Christ, and thereafter obtain his presence ; which sheweth, that where true repentance is, the soul will never sit down on challenges, convictions, or making a-mends in the conversation, or any thing in self ; but it will be restless, until by faith it close with Christ ; yea, it will be pressing after the intimation of his favour, on the back of any peace attained in closing with him, as *David* doth, *Psal. 51.*

Verse 5. *I rose up to open to my Beloved, and my hands dropped with myrrhe, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrhe, upon the handles of the lock.*

There are two steps of her carriage, or effects of the Spirit's work, *verse 5.* The first is, her bowels being thus stirred and moved, she *ariseeth to open*, as being sorry she had lyen still and shifted him so long ; *I rose up* : this is opposite to her former lying still, and refusing to give him entry ; now she yields, and begins to bestir her self, to draw her clothes to her, &c. Which imports not only more diligence as to the matter of duty, but much seriousness as to the manner : It seems to differ from opening (which is the actual receiving of

Christ into the heart, when all things are ready and prepared) not as if it were simply contradistinguished from faith (for, this being a fruit of her repentance, and he acknowledged to be her Beloved, there behoved to be faith in it) but only, as one degree or act of faith is distinguished from another, as, *Luke 15.* in the prodigal's case, it is said, after he came to himself, before he act, he deliberates and stirs himself; so this holds forth her rousing and quickning her self, for receiving Christ, which is not separate in time, either from her repentance in the former words, or her faith in these that follow: *she rose to open*, that shews her design, that she resolved now not to stand at, but to go over her former reasonings; and purposed, by this stirring, to have the way rid for Christ's entry, and to make him welcome: which shews, it was no confused exercise that her repentance put her unto, but distinct and digested, like the prodigal's, *I will arise, and go to my Father, and say, &c.*

*Observ.* 1. Repentance will put the securest sinners to their feet, when it is real. 2. There is no settling of an exercised mind, but in receiving of Christ, and in making of him welcome. 3. When the heart is affected with the sense of sin, and desire to have Christ, it is not time to delay or dispute what to do, but to rise and open, and by faith to receive Christ. 4. Where a soul hath been plunged in security, or (like the prodigal, *Luke 15.*) in profanity, there will be need of gathering, composing and rousing of it self, for exercising of faith in Christ; this is not from any difficulty that is on grace's side to receive a sinner, but from the difficulty that is on the sinner's side, in acting of grace, who, being at a low ebb, must by several steps of grace ascend out of it, with a kind of violence to corruption, discouragement and unbelief, from under the power of which the penitent must arise, when they combine to intangle and detain him, as she doth here. 5. Believers would be distinct in their exercises, especially in reference to their end and design, that in their activity and stirrings it may be discerned by themselves what they would be at: Some exercises are confused, neither having a distinct cause, nor a distinct end; kindly exercise hath both, though much confusion may be with it. 6. Faith in Christ, and making way for him into the heart, should be, and is the native end of all inward exercises, diligence in duties, &c. This must be the great scope of all pains whatsoever; these stings of exercise that put not the soul to open to him, though they put the person thorow other, are not to be fostered, nor laid much weight upon. 7. Though faith and duty differ, and the most active frame is not to be rested on without faith, yet activity in duty, and liveliness in the exercise of faith, go together; As her rising and opening do, even as before, her lying still, and the keeping of him out, went together. Yea, 8. This activeness runs especially to perform what he called to: He called to open, and she accordingly riseth to open; which shews, that the penitent's

penitent's activity doth principally bend it self towards these duties, that Christ in a more especial manner calls for.

She proceeds to set down her experience which she found when she had risen, which is the third effect of the work of grace on her, by Christ's putting in his hand, when she arose to open : *Her hands and fingers dropped sweet smelling myrrhe upon the handles of the lock.* She continues the comparison of opening a shut door ; he, as it were, put in the key without, and she came to draw the handle or slot within. ( as is usual in some locks ) The door is the heart, as *Psal. 24. 7.* called, *the everlasting doors* : The lock that closeth, is unbelief and security, indisposition and declining in the exercise of grace, whereby, as by a fast lock, Christ in his access to the heart is kept out : Now she puts to her hands and fingers to the lock within, which imports her stirring her self again in the exercise of faith and diligence, being now arisen to open ; therefore, by faith we are said to grip and take hold of Christ, and to work righteousness, and by it the heart is opened to him, as follows. This *sweet smelling myrrhe*, that drops, is the flowing of habitual grace, which formerly was not vigorous and active, but now it flows and vents, and is to the heart, as oil applied to moisten and make easy a roused lock, to make it open without difficulty : This grace is ordinarily compared to myrrhe, and the anointing typical oil was made of it and of other spices, *Exod. 30. 23.* It is said, here, to drop from her *fingers*, implying the active stirring of her faith ; because, when faith becomes lively, it puts all other graces to exercise, and thereby ( as it were by oil ) her former hardness and indisposition was softened and removed, and her heart made meet to act lively. In sum, it is this, That when she, in the exercise of faith and holiness, set herself seriously and effectually to make way for Christ, and to remove what formerly had kept him out, through her indisposition, unexpectedly she found, that, by his putting in of his hand, it went much more easily and sweetly than she expected, all had been so anointed and quickned ; and thus conduced to the opening of her heart, as dropping of oil doth to the easy opening of a lock : Which shews, 1. That the work of grace upon the heart, being applied by Christ from without, doth leave an inward fitness on the heart within for the opening of itself to him : Grace infused and quickned by Christ's Spirit, will make the most indisposed and secure heart to open to him heartily. 2. That though Christ apply grace from without to open the heart, yet will he have the heart formally opening itself to him ; and though the heart open itself formally to him, yet it is by the vertue of his application from without ; for, this putting to of her hand, and its dropping myrrhe, is the effect of his putting in his hand first. 3. Often, when the most spiritual and difficult duties (if it were even faith it self) are essayed, they will be found more easy than was expected,

pected, and none can tell how they will go with them, till they undertake and set about them. She, while lying in her security, thought it impossible to get this done, yet now it goes easily and sweetly with her. O but when grace goes along and flows, the exercise of duty is a sweet and easy work!

4. Although the exercise of grace make duties easy, and a supply of help be given thereby for doing of spiritual duties, yet the Lord will have the person essaying duty ere he find it so; nor can he find or expect that supply that will facilitate duties to him, till he first set himself about them; as she first *rises to open, before her fingers drop with myrrhe.* 5. These that set themselves to open to Christ, and mind that singly from the sense of their need of him, and being affected for wronging of him, will not find grace wanting and deficient to help them; and by this all the mouths of unbelievers will be stopped, that are ready to say, and usually say, they had not grace to open. 6. Faith in exercise hath a great influence on the keeping of all other graces in a believer fresh and green, because it acts by Christ's strength; and therefore, when it is in exercise, it makes all the rest to drop, as it were, *with sweet smelling myrrhe.*

*Verse 6. I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him: I called him, but he gave me no answer.*

This 6. *verse* contains five particulars of the Bride's experience in this case. The first of them, *I opened, &c.* is the last effect following upon his putting in his hand, *verse 4.* This work of grace left her not in an indifferency, whether to open or not; but, having given her to will in the former *verse*, now he gives also to do, and actually determines the will, or makes it determine itself to receive him: but now Christ is found to be absent, whereupon follows the other steps of her carriage, and the disappointments that she met with in seeking of him. This opening is the very thing called for by him, *verse 3.* which (considering the words following) is especially to be understood of her exercising of faith in him, whereby the heart is delated to receive him; hence believing is called, a *receiving of Christ*, John 1. 12. And it being a heart-receiving, it must be the very thing understood hereby opening. Now, although faith, according to its several acts, may be several ways considered, yet that act of faith, whereby the heart consents to receive Christ, and to rest on him, is that which is mainly here aimed at, *1st*, Because this opening is opposed to refusing, *Psal. 81. 10, 11.* It must therefore be

consenting. 2<sup>dly</sup>, It is not giving of consent, that mainly keeps Christ at a distance from souls; or keeps them without interest in him; as opening to him, or receiving of him, intitles them to him, *John* 1. 11, 12. and *Acts* 16. 14. 3<sup>dly</sup>, This opening is both different from conviction, resolutions, repentance, and what may be supposed to preceed; these were in the words going before: and is also distinguished from sense and the fruits of believing, which follow after: It must therefore be the heart's yielding to Christ's call, and submitting thereunto, *Rom.* 10. 3. as actually consenting to be his: Yet all these acts would not be looked on as distinct in respect of time, as they proceed from grace (which puts all together) but in nature, and in respect of the distinct uptaking of the same grace, in its effects: In a word, saith the Bride, the Lord having applied the work of his Spirit to me, it effectuated one step after another, and left me not until I yielded my self to him to be his, as a mansion for him to dwell in. Which shews, 1. That grace doth not only work upon the understanding to enlighten it, but that it doth also immediately work on the will, and determines it; for, this opening of the heart is an effect of that work of grace, *verse* 4. as the former steps were. 2. The act of believing and opening to Christ, is both the effect of grace, and also the work formally of the believer: Therefore the Lord is said to *open the heart*, *Acts* 16. 14. because the effect flows from his putting to his hand; and the Bride is said to *open* her own heart, because she formerly brought forth, or elicited the act of faith, by the strength of grace. 3. This (being compared with his call, *verse* 3.) shews, that it is by faith that way is made for Christ into the heart, and it is that which especially intitles one to Christ, closes with his call, receives him, and enters covenant with him; for, if opening or believing be that which he calls for, as giving him access to the hearts of his people, then believing, being the performance of that called-for condition, must unite the soul to him, and enter him into the heart. 4. There is some peculiar efficacy in faith, in the uniting of one to Christ, in accepting of Christ's call, and making way for him to come into the heart, which is not in any other grace: Or, it hath a peculiar way of concurring, in effectuating the person's union with Christ (and so in justification) which no other grace hath: Hence this opening is peculiarly to be attributed to it, and is distinct from repentance, spoken of before, *verse* 4. and from other duties mentioned in the words following. 5. Whoever honestly, from the sense of sin, and need of Christ, and desire to have him to supply their need, essays believing and opening their heart to him, shall certainly come good speed, and without fail attain their design; *I rose to open* (saith she) *and I opened*. 6. Although the distinct exercise of faith be not attained instantly, (but there must be first a rising, and an offering of violence to our corruptions, in the pursuing there-  
of

of, before we win to the distinct opening of the heart) yet it should be prosecuted till it be perfected. 7. Sometimes the exercise of faith will be distinct and discernable, so that a believer can tell he hath believed; and it is no less comfortable, to be clear from serious reflecting on our selves, that we have indeed by faith yielded to Christ, than to be clear of it by the fruits following thereupon: For she is clear and confident in this, that she had opened to him.

Having opened, now the Beloved is gone, like as a husband, being offended at his wife's disrespect to him, should withdraw, when she at length, with much ado, were brought to rise; so our Lord Jesus takes that way of rebuking kindly the former unkindness of believers, by after desertions and withdrawals. The word is doubled, *but my Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone*, or, *he was gone, he was gone*; which doth not only import in his carriage a sad withdrawing, and on hers an observation on it; but also a sorrowful regrade and weightedness, as having met with a sad disappointment (as the following words clear) as if she had said, At last I opened, but alas he was gone and away! What this withdrawing of Christ is, we may know by considering what his being present is, which is not to be understood of the omnipresence of his Godhead, there being no coming nor going that can be attributed to that infinite essence, which is every-where at all times present; but it is in respect of the out-letting of his especial love, and that in the peculiar way of manifesting it to his people, and not in regard of his love itself, or of their interest in him; for, here her interest stands in him, and faith in him is exercised, and the lifelessness that she was under is removed; so that now she is acting faith, and there is a presence of grace making her active and lively, even under this withdrawing: The thing then, which is wanting, is a sensible manifestation of Christ's love to her, which now, upon her yielding to open, she expected to have been filled with; as a wife opening to her husband should expect his embracements, and yet, in place thereof, find that he were gone. This withdrawing is no real alteration on Christ's side, nor are we to look upon it as if now she had less than before she believed and bestirred her self; for, her union with him, and the influence of his grace on her, remained: But, 1<sup>st</sup>, She missed that comfortable and sweet sense of love that she expected from him; that was kept up. 2<sup>dly</sup>, She was then more sensible that he was provoked, and found that her peace was not so well grounded, which formerly she pleased her self with, as she conceived. 3<sup>dly</sup>, Upon this also followed some kindly exercise, whereby Christ might make his dissatisfaction known, as a husband doth his, by his withdrawing; so that, altho' interest be not disputed, and the heart be kept in the exercise of duties, yet disquietness may grow above what it was:

And

And Christ wisely times this sense of his absence now, with the presence of his grace, because she might both better endure it, and it would also be more profitable thus to chasten her now, than if he had done it in her dead condition. Hence, *Observe*, 1. That believers, in the lively exercise of faith and duty, may have many more exercises, and sharper spiritual dispensations, than they had formerly in their security. 2. Christ hath a peculiar way both of presence with, and absence from his own. 3. Often believers, when they are in the exercise of faith and duty, expect satisfying manifestations of Christ to their sense; for, it is supposed here, that she looked for him this way, when she opened. 4. Sometimes Christ will keep up the sense of his love, and withdraw himself from his own, even in the exercise of faith and duty. 5. Christ's withdrawing is not always an evidence of the worst frame, even as his presence doth not speak out his satisfaction every way with his peoples condition; but these are often acts of sovereignty, timed according to his good pleasure: for, she is now in better case than formerly, and yet he is withdrawn and gone. 6. Christ by his withdrawing may be chastning for some former sin or disrespect, done to him before the believer became lively, who yet for good ends did suspend the taking notice of that sin, till he was in a frame to bear it, and profit by it. 7. Christ's withdrawals ought to be observed by his people, as well as other pieces of their own experience: It is profitable to know what he doth, as well as what they do themselves. 8. There is a great difference betwixt faith and sense; yea, betwixt clearness of interest, and sensible presence: the one may be in a great measure, where the other is not, as in this case here. 9. It is the exercise of faith in Christ, that makes his absence to be discerned: (for that is not known here, till the door be opened) And the more lively a person be in the exercise of grace, the more will Christ's absence be marked and regretted; whereas, in a believer's secure frame, or in a person still unacquainted with Christ, his absence is not discerned nor laid to heart. 10. Altho' sense be not satisfied, yet believers should not disclaim their faith when it is real, but acknowledge that they do believe, and open to Christ when they do it: So it is here, *I opened*, or yielded by faith to him, even when he was gone, and I could not find him.

What effect this disappointment had upon her part, follows, *My soul failed when he spake*: This effect is sad and heavy; the sense of her sin, and the apprehension of her grieving of him, kindled by love to him, pierceth and stoundeth her so to the heart, that it becomes almost lifeless: So the word is used, *Gen. 42. 28.* of Jacob's sons, when they found the money in their sacks mouths, they were fore afraid, and their *hearts failed them*, or, *went out of them*: It is a surprising unexpected heaviness, and that in a high degree, holding forth how deeply believers will be affected, when disappointed of the expected presence.

sence of Christ, and that by their own guilt. The cause or occasion of this failing of heart is in these words, *when he spake*, which look to the time past, tho' the effect was present: And they may be two ways understood, 1<sup>st</sup>, As being a remembring how it was with her while he spake (for now he speaks not) she now observes and calls to mind, that when he called and she shifted, yet even then her heart was affected with his word; and this smites her now, that she should have so long smothered so much kindness, and have brought all this upon her self: It is like that of the disciples, *Luke 24. 32.* who, after Christ was gone, say one to another, *Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and opened up to us the scriptures?* Tho' before they little heeded it, yet afterward they observe; and when they recollect themselves, it becomes more distinct than it was in the time. 2<sup>dly</sup>, It may be looked on as being the present effect of the words formerly spoken, which, altho' they did not so sensibly affect her when he spoke them, yet now being brought to her remembrance (as, *John 14. 16.*) they pierce her, that she should have slighted and neglected them; as, *Matth. 26.* when Peter is admonished, the word for the time affects not, but afterward, *verse 75.* when he remembers it (as challenges bring back words formerly spoken) *he went out and wept bitterly*; so her repentment of what she formerly slighted is now bitter. *Obs.* 1. The time of Christ's absence is a time when bygone challenges, or challenges for bypast offences, use to recur. 2. Often believers, when brought through a secure fit, will find some stirrings and effects of the grace of Christ to have been in them, even then, which were not so discernable to them while they were under their distemper. 3. Christ's word may have effects long after it is spoken and heard; yea, a word long since heard, may be an after-remembrance (being brought again to mind by the Spirit) *John 14. 26.* and have operation more than at first: Or, altho' for a time it have had none at all, but may be as seed under the ground, till the Spirit blow on it to bring it above, yet afterward, by the Spirit's influence, it may have many blessed effects. 4. There is nothing that will affect a gracious soul more, than to miss Christ's presence, when the disappointment hath been procured by its own sin: If it be but a withdrawing for a time, that will make the hearts of his own even *to fail*; but O if it be eternal, by reason of sinners constant slighting of him now in the offers of his grace, what desperate anguish will it produce! And there is none that slights Christ's call now, and puts him away, but one time or other it will be heavy to them, and cost them dear. 5. It is a kindly thing, when a believer misses Christ, and wants presence, to be affected with it; and it is unkindly to discern absence, and not to be affected. 6. Repentance where it is kindly, or right heart-sorrow, will have its continuance and growth from one degree to another: This *failing of heart*

heart is a continued, but a further step of the moving of her bowels, verse 4. 7. Altho' interest in Christ be clear, and matters otherwise not in an evil case, yet want of Christ's presence for the time, and the remembrance of bygone guilt, will be a very sad exercise to the believer, and affect his heart very much.

This is a sad posture ; yet she gives not over, notwithstanding of this or any following disappointments, till she obtain the holy design she drives : Where faith and love are exercised together, for attaining Christ, nothing will scar nor discourage the soul in its pursuit of him. Her carriage follows in four steps (whereby she endeavours to recover him) with the success that she found in each of them. 1<sup>st</sup>, She gives private diligence. 2<sup>dly</sup>, She applies her self to publick ordinances, *verse 7.* When that also fails, she, 3<sup>dly</sup>, betakes her self to the exercise of mutual fellowship with the daughters of *Jerusalem*, and seeks their help, *verse 8.* and at last rests on the exercise of faith in him, *chap. 6. 3.* Her secret painfulness, with the fruit thereof, is set down in two steps, in the rest of this verse. First, *I sought him*, that is, painfully used all means to meet with him, as one searcheth earnestly for what he wants ; so the word is taken, *Prov. 15. 14.* It shews her seriousness as to the end, and also her holy solicitude in the manner of pursuing it : *But* (saith she) *I found him not* ; he was now obtained, but she continueth still under the want of the sensible manifestations of his presence. Again, the second is, *I called him*, that is, prayed to him ; *but* (saith she) *he gave me no answer* : that is, *I had no sensible ease, and return of prayer* ; tho' the prayer was not altogether unheard : for, her continuing to seek after him, shews, that *she was answered with strength in her soul*, *Psal. 138. 3.* There was sustaining-grace even then, tho' there were not the soul-satisfying and comforting enlargements, or sensible embracements of Christ, and his warm-speaking of peace to her heart, which she aimed at ; and the greatness of her benfil after these makes her think that she had received no answer at all. It is in sum, as if a wife, by searching and running to and fro, did seek her husband ; and when that succeeds not, she calls him by his name : So did she leave no mean unessayed, but did not obtain what she sought. Which shews, 1. That God often blesteth want of sense to a believer, to be a spur to much diligence. 2. When desertions are most sensible, then ought the believer to be most diligent in the use of all means, especially of prayer, for an outgate. 3. There may be much life in duty, even then when there is little sense and satisfaction as to the event ; there is here seeking and calling on him, tho' she found him not, and he gave her no answer. 4. It is a blessed heart-sorrow, that vests in diligence and prayer to God for his presence. 5. The remembrance and resentment of our bygone wrongs to Christ should not so affect as to scar us from him, but should press

us to seek to be again in his company; otherwise, if we fear at him, or bide away from him, because of the sense of guilt, it will be the mending of one fault with another. It is ever best reckoning our own guilt, when he is present. 6. Christ's presence is the only cordial that can satisfy a soul, fainting under the sense of the wrongs it hath done to Christ; therefore, when her heart fails, she sits not down under it for ease, but seeks and calls for himself, and his own presence. 7. There may be much seeking and prayer, which may be so indeed, and accepted of by God, and yet his comfortable presence be kept up, and the particular sought-for suspended. 8. Often the having of our eye in prayer upon one particular (suppose upon one comfort) may make us construct our prayers to have less of an answer than they have; whereas indeed they are not fruitless, but may be answered in other things, which we do not observe. 9. The Lord may deny comfort when it is sought, and yet shew his grace in sustaining his people, and quickning them to follow him in their duty, when they in the mean time may take it for a sort of refusal, 2 Cor. 12. 9, 10. It is ever good for believers to reflect on their duty, and on the success of it, whatever it be; and that not in one step only, but in the whole tract of their way. 10. If we compare this with her former carnally easy and secure condition, *verse 2, 3.* we see, that sensible desertion, when a believer is holily active under it, is no ill condition: Comparatively it is better with her now, when she is swooning and fainting without Christ, than when she did ly still carelessly without him; grace is working more actively now (as from *verse 4.* is clear) and she is nearer unto him, and hath much more solid ground of peace than she had at that time.

*Verse 7. The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me, the keepers of the walls took away my vail from me.*

When private means do not the business, the Bride betakes her to publick ordinances, and frequents them: And this 7th *verse* shews what she found in the use of that mean, a sad disappointment also, which is several ways aggregated. Christ's presence is easily lost, but it is not easily recovered; this will cost much pains, and the enduring of many perplexing disappointments: It is much more difficult to win to enjoy Christ, than it is to lose him; lying on the bed in ease may bring on that, which much labour and watching will not remove.

That this *verse* points at her going about the publick ordinances, the scope makes clear, that being the next ordinary mean used for enquiring after an absent Christ, when private diligence hath had little success. The matter of

the words, as was cleared in *chap. 3. 3.* doth also evidence this: The Church is the city which hath walls (that is, the ordinances) for preventing her hurt, and promoting of her edification; the watchmen are her ministers, appointed and designed to keep the walls, and to go about the city; they are said to go about the city, in respect of their care and solicitude to prevent inward difficulties and hazards; and are called keepers of the walls, as they stand to repel what from without may disturb the Church's edification, and ecclesiastick peace: In a word, they are the same by office, that these were, *chap. 3. 3.* but their carriage to her is more unlike the relation they stood in; which is set forth in four steps, all which are to be looked on as a special piece of untenderness in them, and of suffering in her; which now the Lord in his wisdom permits her to meet with, that so she may find how unwisely she had done to neglect Christ's kind call, *verse 2.* when as now other hands dealt more roughly with her: The reasons hinted, *chap. 3. 3.* do confirm this; beside, there being so much spoken of their wounding of her, either she or they must be wrong: Now she is (for the main) in her duty, and under a fainting condition, seeking after Christ; and there is no warrant to wound a poor seeker of Christ in such a condition, even where there have been former failings, (*2 Cor. 2. 7.* the Apostle will have the incestuous person in such a case tenderly dealt with, lest he should be swallowed up) but it is duty rather to bind up their wounds, and to pour oil into them, by speaking a word in season to such weary souls. This was, no doubt, their duty, and the Lord himself doth so, *Isa. 50. 4.* Neither could her former security be a ground to reach her such blows now, especially her offence being betwixt Christ and her their alones, and so no object of publick reproof; and she, being a burden to her self, ought not to have been made more heavy by them: Besides, *chap. 3. 4.* the watchmen dealt more tenderly with her, when yet she had been in security also. This dealing of theirs cannot be to speak a word in season to the weary soul of a tender person, whose carriage is so convincing, even to others, that *verse 9.* they give her a high commendation, which is a clear testimony against the malignity of these watchmen; they must therefore be lookt on as untender, or unskillful, or both, who do thus misapply the word contrary to the end for which it is appointed, and as miserable comforters talk to the grief of such as he hath wounded. The first step is, *They found me*: It is not the finding of a friend, as *chap. 3. 3.* but (as the effects clear) the finding of an enemy, and is, as if a minister should digress of purpose, to take in the case of some poor tender soul, that he might reach it a blow, though beside his text: Thus, *Ezek. 34. 21.* The idol shepherds (who, it may be, had a true external call) are said to thrust with the side and shoulder, and push all the diseases with the horns: And, *verse 4.* to rule with force and

cruelty: And in Ezek. 13. 20. they are said to *hunt the souls of God's people*; a part of which cruelty and oppression, is *verse 22. in making the righteous sad*: This is their *finding*, a seeking occasion to load them with bitter invectives and reproaches. It is observable also, that here at the very first *finding* they hurt her, without so much as suffering her to tell her own case, as she did to the watchmen, *chap. 3. 3.* so that, without taking notice of her condition, they presently fall upon her; which saith, that, in their smiting her, they did not respect her case. 2. *They smote her*, that is, more gently at first; however, they suffer no occasion to slip, whereby they have any access to give a wipe to such heart-exercised souls, but it is laid hold upon; and what infirmity is in any of them, or inconsiderateness in their zeal, that is casten up, and often somewhat of less moment is much aggregated. The word takes in also wronging with the tongue, *Jer. 18. 18. Come, let us smite Jeremiah with the tongue*: and it is like, by the words following in that verse, the profane priests had no little accession to it. 3. *They wound her*: This is a further step, and imports such a smiting as continues till the person be wounded, denoting a higher degree of cruelty, such as is the *persecuting of these whom God hath smitten, and talking to their grief*, *Psal. 69. 26.* which will exceedingly wound a tender exercised soul, who is soon affected; and the Psalm especially points at *Judas*, who, *John 12. 4, 5, 6.* was ready to condemn the holy zeal of an honest soul, which our Lord vindicates, and leaves on record to her eternal commendation. 4. The last step is, *They took away my vail from me*: The word, that's rendred *vail*, comes from a root that signifieth to subdue; it is that same word which we have, *Psal. 144. 2. who subdues the people*, &c. It had a threefold use, (1.) For decorment, as *Isa. 3. 23.* (2.) For a sign of modesty, pleaded for by the apostle, *1 Cor. 11. 6.* (3.) And mainly, for a sign of womens subjection to their own husbands; for which cause *Rebekah* puts on her vail, when she meets *Isaac*, *Gen. 24. 65.* And therefore it is called *power*, as being the sign of the wife's being under the power of her husband, *1 Cor. 11. 10.* Here, her *vail* is the tenderness of her profession, whereby, in a decent, modest and humble way, she profess her self to be a believer, seeking after Christ Jesus, as one bearing the badge of subjection to him as her husband. The *taking away* the vail, is their wronging of that honest profession she had, and the giving of her out, not to be that which she profess her self to be, and so not worthy of a vail; but that her profession was hypocrisy, her painfulness and tenderness, conceitedness; even as *Judas*, *John 12. 5.* nicknames that good work wrought upon Christ by that honest woman, calling it *masking*: And by these, and such other means, often tender souls are affronted, and proposed as a reproach to the multitude; even as if a wife, that is chaste, were denuded of her vail, and reputed

as a gadding harlot, while ſhe is ſeeking her own husband: So, when the Lord threatens his people, that their lewdneſs ſhould be made to appear, he uſeth this expreſſion, *Ezek. 23. 26, 27. They ſhall ſtrip thee out of thy clothes, &c.* that being a manifeſt ſhame to a woman, that ſhould be covered, *1 Cor. 11. 6.* This is added, to ſhew that they pretend they have reaſon for their ſmiting: They diſgrace her, and take away her vail, that they may not be thought to ſmite holineſs or tenderneſs, but a hypocrite under ſuch a vail, or a whore more decently adorned than became her to be.

This is the ſum, When I prevailed not in private diligence, I frequented the publick ordinances; but theſe, who were watchmen and healers by office, being untender (as if they had intended it) did by malice, or want of affection, or through unſkilfulneſs and want of experience, ſo apply the word, that they ſewed pillows under the arm-holes of the profane, and made the righteous ſad: Whereby I was not only nothing profited, but returned more weighed and aſhamed, and had no encouragement to ſeek any more of their help, as I had done, *chap. 3. 3.* but was neceſſitate to turn to others. Which ſhews, that ſhe accounts them untender, and therefore ſets it down here as a piece of her ſad trial; whereas, had it been the wounding of a friend, it had been a kindneſs to her, *Pſal. 141. 5.* and would have engaged her to follow on for healing from that ſame hand, ſo far would it have been from being the matter of her complaint, neither would it have been complained of by her.

Theſe words afford many ſuch doctrines; as, *chap. 3. 3.* As, 1. The viſible Church is a diſtinct incorporation by it ſelf, and all its members have right to its privileges, to wit, ſuch whereof they are capable: It is the City, and they are the Citizens, *Eph. 2. 19. 2.* It is a city that is not without fear and hazard, though it have walls; but it had need to be watched both within and without: Or, the viſible Church hath many enemies, ſhe is in conſtant war; hence therefore ſhe is called the militant Church, and for this cauſe ſhe hath walls and watchmen. 3. The Lord hath provided her with ſufficient means againſt all assaults. 4. A lawfully called miniſtry, or watchmen peculiarly deſigned for that end, are the great mean Chriſt hath appointed for preventing the hurt, and promoting the good and edification of his church, *Eph. 2. 12, 13.* They are as the ſentinels, which he hath ſet on the walls, for giving advertiſement and warning; and this well becomes their office, *Iſa. 62. 6. Ezek. 3. and 33. chapters, and elſewhere.* 5. Tender believers will put a great price upon publick ordinances, even when they ſeem to themſelves to come little ſpeed in their private duties: Private diligence furthens publick, and publick furthens private; theſe two ought not to be, neither will they be ſeparate in a tender perſon, but go together. 6. Tender believers may have weights added to their exerciſe, and a load put above a burden,

burden, even by these whose stations and relations call for much more sympathy and healing. 7. Publick ordinances may be sometimes unfruitful to believers, even when they have great need, and are under great sense of need. 8. When one that is tender gets no good nor ease by publick ordinances, often there is an addition made to his burden thereby. 9. Untender, unskilful and unfaithful men may creep in, and be admitted to the ministry, and to watching over the church, as *Judas* was. 10. When such are gifted, and (as to order) lawfully called, they are truly ministers, though not true ministers, and have authority for discharging of all duties; and duties discharged, or ordinances dispensed by them, according to Christ's warrant, are valid, and the word from their mouth is to be received as from him: therefore they are called watchmen, which imports them to be really in office; which could not be, if the former assertions were not true. 11. Very often, tender believers, in their exercises, suffer much from such ministers: Or, an untender minister is often a great affliction to tender exercised believers; yea, of all men, these prove most sadly afflicting to them: no man wounds godliness more, or wounds and affronts the profession thereof more in them that are the most real and tender professors, than a gifted untender minister may do, and often doth; tho' sometimes the Lord will make use of him for their good, to humble them, yet more to provoke them to the study of more seriousness in secret duties, and to more close and constant waiting on the Lord himself. 12. Where enmity against godliness once ariseth and vents it self against the godly, it often grows from one degree to another, as here; men, especially ministers once engaged in it, are not easily recovered and brought out of that evil, but are carried, yea, often hurried from one step to another: yet, she accounts them watchmen, as holding out the respect she bare to their office, even then. Whence observe, 13. That it is a piece of spiritual wisdom and tenderness, to distinguish carefully betwixt the office of the ministry, or the ordinance it self, and the faults and untenderness of persons, who may miscarry in the exercise of that office; and not to fall from the esteem of the ordinance because of them, or of what faults may be in them, but even then to respect the ordinance, out of respect to Christ, and his institution and appointment. 14. Believers would observe the fruit of publick ordinances, as well as of secret diligence, as the Bride here doth.

Verse 8. *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my Beloved, that ye tell him that I am sick of love.*

When this mean fails her, she gives not over, but betakes her self to the use of mutual fellowship with the saints (which is the third step of her carriage)

age) *verse 8.* that she may have their help for recovering of Christ's presence. She propounds her case to them, and presseth for their bearing burden with her; her case is in the last words, *I am sick of love*: A strange disease, yet kindly to a believer. This sickness implies pangs of a woman in travail, whose shewres are sharp, and pangs vehement till she bring forth: The same word is used to this purpose, *Isa. 26. 17. Like as a woman that draweth near her delivery, is in pain, &c.* And it imports, in this place, these two, 1. *Vehement desire after Christ, from ardent love to him, so that she could not endure to want him.* 2. *Much heart-affectedness following upon that ardent desire, which (under her former disappointments) did beget such pain and fainting, that it was a sore sickness, though not dangerous.* This sickness differs from that spoken of, *chap. 2. 5.* as the scope shews: That is like the pain procured by an overset of the stomach; so the sense of his love, being let out in a very great measure, was like to master her; not, that sense of his love is simply or in it self burdensom, but she is weak like an old bottle, or a queasy and weak stomach, that cannot bear much: But this is like the pain that proceeds from hunger, and a strong appetite, when that which is longed for is not obtained, which augments the desire, and at last breeds fainting and sickness. This shews, 1<sup>st</sup>, That love to Christ, where it is sincere, is a most sensible thing. 2<sup>dly</sup>, That the more disappointments it meets with, in seeking after sensible manifestations of Christ, it grows the more vehement. 3<sup>dly</sup>, That continued absence, to a tender soul, will be exceeding heavy and painful; *hope deferred makes the heart sick*, especially when the sweetness of Christ's presence hath been felt, and his absence distinctly discerned. 4<sup>thly</sup>, That Christ's presence is the souls health, and his absence its sickness, have else what it will. 5<sup>thly</sup>, That love to Christ will sometimes, especially after challenges and disappointments, so over-power the soul, that it cannot, to its own sense at least, act under it, or sustain it (it seems so heavy a burden) as sickness will do to the body, if it get not an outgate.

The way she takes to obtain Christ, after all other means fail her, is by making her application to the daughters of *Jerusalem*: Indeed it is Christ, and not they, that can cure her: he is the only medicine for a sick soul; therefore, her design is not to rest in their company, but to make use of it for obtaining his company: For, the company, although it were even of angels, will not be satisfying to a soul that seeks Christ; the best fellowship is empty without him, *John 20. 12, 13. Why weepest thou?* (say the angels) *Why?* (saith she) *they have taken away my Lord.* In this consider, 1<sup>st</sup>, The parties she betakes her self to, the daughters of *Jerusalem*, spoken of, *chap. 1. 5.* professors not of the worst stamp; yet (as after appears) under much ignorance of Christ, and of spiritual exercise: This is the mean she goes now unto. Where observe,

(1). Spiritual

(1.) Spiritual communion amongst professors or believers, is not only a duty, but a special mean, being rightly made use of, to further our fellowship with Christ (2.) Believers, in their sad cases, may, and ought freely to make use of this mean, by desiring others help; and for their own ease and furtherance in meeting with Christ, by communicating their case to them, as she doth here. (3.) Even the strongest believers (whom the Bride represents) may be helped by these, that are much weaker than themselves in gifts, grace and experience; as the daughters of *Jerusalem* are here: And so *Paul* often requires of others, inferior to, and much short of him, the help of their prayers. Consider, 2<sup>dly</sup>, Her desire to him, *Tell him* (saith she) *I am sick of love*; make my case known to him, and hold it up by prayer: She had been doing so her self, and had not come speed; and therefore she puts them upon it, that they might help her to obtain an answer. *Observ.* 1. That prayer for one another, is a duty of mutual fellowship, especially for these that are exercised: Others should be in that exercise with them, *James* 5. 17. 2. Believers sometimes will not trust themselves with the opening of their own case to Christ, and will not be satisfied with their own way, but will think others can do it much better. 3. Praying for our selves, and desiring of help from others, should go together; Or, it will give most clearness and peace to believers, to desire the help of others, when they have been serious in the use of all means by themselves, as she had been. 4. It says, That believers holding up the case of another, will be very acceptable to Christ. And, 5. That there is nothing we can tell Christ, of our own or other folks case, that will be more pleasant to, and taking with him, than this, that we are they who are *sick of love* to him: This is propounded, as that which may and will be most acceptable to him; *What shall ye tell him?* (so the words run) these are the best and most acceptable news to him. 6. Such a case as love-sickness is a good motive, upon which to press for the help of others prayers, and that which may also give confidence to any, to bear such a message to Christ. 7. Believers, in their communion with others, would more insist upon their own cases, than on the faults of ministers, or miscarriages of others: Although she was formerly smitten by the watchmen, yet this is the great thing she propounds to them. Consider, 3<sup>dly</sup>, A qualification, put in her suit to the daughters of *Jerusalem*, *If ye find him*: That is, if ye get access, which now she thinks her self excluded from. And it imports, 1. That there is a peculiar finding of, and access unto Christ, at one time beyond another. 2. That a weak believer may sometimes have much more access to Christ, and sensible communion with him, than others of greater parts and experience: She supposes that they might find, while she did not. 3. That when any gets access for themselves, then especially, they should remember others, and improve their

their court with Christ, for their good who may be in bonds, and under sad exercise: Then (saith she) when ye get access, remember my case: She would share of the fruit of their most warm enjoyments. 4. She doth not resent nor envy this, or become jealous of it, but humbly submits to be helped by them; Christ will have every one useful to another, and the strongest should not disdain to be in the common of the weakest.

The last thing is the manner of her proposing of it, *I charge or adjure you* (saith she) which hath the force of an oath proposed to others, as if she had sworn them that they should do it: The same charge or adjuration is set down, chap. 2. 7. and 3. 4. She puts them to it, as they will be answerable. Which shews, 1. Great seriousness in her; the matter of christian-fellowship, and our desiring of the help of others prayers, is no matter of compliment, but should in earnest be sought for. 2. She desires seriousness in them, in their discharge of this duty: In our praying for others, conscience would be made of it, as seriously as for our selves, and we would beware of superficialness and overliness in it. 3. Our expressions in our fellowship, especially concerning the most serious purposes, would be suitably serious: A light manner of speaking, in serious things, often spills the beauty of them, marrs edification, and diminisheth from the weight of the matters themselves.

### Daughters of Jerusalem.

Verse 9. *What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?*

In this 9. verse, is the third part of the chapter, where the daughters of Jerusalem are brought in speaking; where we may see what effect the Bride's serious charge had upon them: It some way surpriseth and astonisheth them; to see a person, convincingly approveable in her carriage, so taken up with that which the most part of the world flights; this makes them think, that he, whom she asketh for, must be a person beyond ordinary, and in this they conclude right. There is much infirmity in this question (as often many professors are upon the matter really ignorant of Christ's worth) yet some honest like things at least are in it. There is, *First*, Respect to her as a beautiful and goodly person, even when she was thought little of by the watchmen. *Secondly*, Docileness, and a desire to know. *Thirdly*, Some suspicion of their own knowledge of Christ. And, *Fourthly*, Ingenuity in seeking help. All which are good symptoms in beginners; and we will see that the question ended well with them, chap. 6. 1. and it is like, was awakned in them by her

serious carriage. The return they make to her charge, hath in it, 1. The title they give her. 2. The question they propose to her. 3. The rise of it, or that which gives them occasion to ask, and which puts them to it. The title is excellent, *O thou fairest among women*: It was given to the Bride by Christ himself, *chap. 1. 8.* It implies, (1.) A spiritual beauty in her who now was thought little of by the watchmen, and had her own crosses in the world, yet even in this case lovely in her self, and lovely to these daughters. *Obj. 1st,* That believers should be eminently convincing, and commendable in their carriage even before others; they should be *fairest* among them, and for spiritual beauty conspicuous, as lights shining in a dark place. *2dly,* Grace, when seriously in exercise, is that which makes any person (though outwardly mean and contemptible) truly beautiful and lovely; it makes them so really, and also in the eyes of all spiritual beholders. *3dly,* Sometimes God will make honest seekers of him the more lovely to others, when corrupt ministers seek most to defame them: the watchmens wounding her, marring not the daughters estimation of her; and this shews, that they did smite her without reason. Again, (2.) It implies respectiveness on their part, and also honesty; for, there is now no external thing to commend her to them: Which saith, 1. That to the spiritual eye of honest souls, none will be so beautiful as the person that is holy; yea, sometimes holiness will have a commendation in the consciences even of them that are strangers to it. 2. Often holiness may be more esteemed of, and holy persons more respectfully dealt with, by men of little either knowledge or profession, than by these who may be much more knowing, and whose station and place calls them to be more tender. The Bride, here, is like the wounded person, *Luke 10. 31, &c.* whom the Samaritan succoured, when both the Priest and the Levite had passed by him. 3. Where grace shines, it would be highly esteemed of and respected; and such as are but babes in Christ, ought much to reverence these that are of older standing. 4. Tender souls, when under exercise, if we can do no more to ease them, would be respectfully spoken unto at least. These daughters do not wound the Bride, as the watchmen did, but speak discreetly and respectfully to her, although they can further her little. 5. The right use of freedom, and seriousness with humility in mutual fellowship, is a great help to entertain mutual respect amongst professors; when the weak see the strong ones not puffed up, but condescending to take their help, it will conciliate love and respect: Thus the Daughters meet the Bride here with respective carriage. 6. Respective expressions of one professor to another, with gravity and seriousness, becomes christian-fellowship well; and is a great furtherance of edification and mutual confidence: So we see here, and *chap. 6. 1.* as also in the Bride's expressions preceeding.

Secondly, The

Secondly, The question propounded by them, is, *What is thy Beloved?* as scarce knowing him, or acquainted with him themselves: It is not spoken out of disdain, but out of desire to know, being convinced, that there behoved to be some excellency in him, beyond others, as the following effects clear. The question is proposed by way of comparison, and doubled, *What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?* or, *the beloved of another?* By *beloved*, all amongst, is understood that which the soul loves and cleaves unto; therefore Christ is sometimes designed by the one name, *the soul's love*; and sometimes by the other, the *Beloved*; as we may see, by comparing chap. 3. 1, 2, 3. with chap. 2. 16, 17. because he eminently, and above competition, had the Bride's heart. By *other beloveds*, are understood these things that men of the world set their love and affections upon, and which bears most sway with them, as that which in a singular manner their soul loveth; the same that ordinarily are called *Idols*, because they are put in God's room. There is the same reason here, why they are called *other beloveds*, and *strange lovers* elsewhere: Such are the belly, Phil. 3. 19. *the world*, 1 John 2. 15, 16. *Love not the world, nor the things of it, &c. the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life*: So, it is as if they had said, There are many things which the men of the world seek after: it is none of all these that this Bride is enquiring for; she rests not satisfied with these, nor valueth them: he must then be some excellent person, a singular and non-such Beloved, that she is so serious in the enquiry after; and therefore they desire to know from her self what he is. The question is doubled, as being the result of a serious desire to know, and of high admiration, what he might be, who was thus enquired for.

Thirdly, The words added, shew what is the rise of her question and wondering, *to wit*, these, *That thou dost so charge us*: Every word hath weight; it is *thou*, the fairest among women, who certainly can make the best choice. 2. Thou art not only in earnest thy self, but *chargest* us also. And, 3. Not only thou chargest us, but *so vehemently*, pressingly and weightily; This, sure, must be some excellent Beloved. This question carrieth in it, not so much an enquiry who is the believer's choice, as their desire to know what Christ was indeed, in respect of his real worth, whose name only (or little more) they knew before: Therefore, they say not, *who is*, but *what is thy Beloved?* as knowing his name, but being much ignorant of his worth. Again, it supposeth such a question to be moved by these professors, upon occasion of her exemplary carriage: And indeed, it cannot be told, what thoughts, serious challenges, and exercising questions, the convincing carriage of believers will have amongst those with whom they christianly converse; and so it shews, that this seriousness in one, may put others to it, to question what the

matter may be, and through God's blessing may commend Christ to them in the end, which is the scope.

*Obs.* 1. There may be some respect to godly persons, where there is much ignorance of Christ himself. 2. Where there is esteem of godliness and of these who study it, there is some begun inquiry for Christ himself, and it leads on to further, although the beginnings be weak. 3. True tenderness in beginners appears in nothing sooner, than in respect to these who were in Christ before them: They are now but a-beginning, yet it shews it self in the respect they carry to the Bride. 4. It is no shame for these that are unacquainted with Christ, to enquire for him at such as know him. 5. What Christ is, and the necessity of praying for others, is a suitable subject of discourse in Christian-fellowship; What is Christ? say they to her; and pray for me, saith she to them. 6. Christ's name may be known to many, to whom his worth is unknown, or but little known, and who are not acquainted with what he is. 7. All men naturally have some lust, idol, or beloved, that their affection is set upon, beside Christ; it is some other thing, from which he is distinguished, and to which he is opposed. 8. Men lay out their affections liberally upon their idols, and upon these things that their heart cleaves unto beside Christ: they are *beloveds*, and opposed to Christ, as being that to the men of the world, that Christ is to his own; they are as Gods and Christs to them, they run so mad upon their idols, and are so *joined* to them, *Hof.* 4. 17. men naturally have an high esteem of their idols, as placing some worth in them which is not, and they have a low esteem of Christ, and prefer their idols to him. 9. This mistake is a great cause of Christ's being slighted in the world, that they think *other beloveds* as good as he, and other lives as good as the life of holiness; therefore they go to the *farm, plough, market*, and *make light of Christ*, *Matth.* 22. 4, 10. The questioning of this grand principle of corrupt nature, that Christ is no better than other *beloveds*, or the inquiring whether he be indeed better than these, is one of the first rises of a soul's making forward to inquire for him. 11. The growing of the esteem of Christ in a soul, and the decay of the esteem of all idols, (formerly beloveds) go together; as the one stands, the other falls; as the one grows, the other decays. 12. The right up-taking of Christ's worth, is the great thing that commends Christ to a soul (therefore the Bride describes him afterward) and the thorow conviction of the vanity of all other things looseth the grips of our affections from them, and makes way for setting up Christ more high. 13. The convincing-carriage of a believer may stir and raise an exercise in these that formerly were secure: And God can make the words of a private humble Christian, the rise of a serious inquiry after Christ in another; thus her serious charging of them doth so

sick

sick to them, as if that word, *I charge you*, had pierced them. 14. Nothing more adorns the Gospel, and commends Christ, and makes him lovely to others, than the convincing, serious carriage of believers. 15. These who are not acquaint with Christ's worth, or the exercise of believers, are ready to wonder what moves them, and puts them to make such a stir about Christ, more than others that live satisfied and contented without him.

### B R I D E.

Verse 10. *My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.*

From *verse 10.* to the end (which contains the fourth part of the chapter) the Bride speaks: and (in answer to the daughters of *Jerusalem* their question) in a sweet, pithy, taking-manner commends her Beloved. She is not long in returning answer to their question, as being fully clear and ready to demonstrate Christ her Beloved his worth above all; and as impatient that any other should be put in competition with him (especially by the daughters of *Jerusalem*, whose edification she studies by this to promote) instantly she steps in with a large commendation of Christ, (though in few words) whereby she doth so demonstrate him to be an Object infinitely worthy to be her soul's Beloved beyond all others, that, *chap. 6. 1.* they as convinced yield, acknowledging that her Beloved was preferable to all other beloveds, and that therefore they are engaged to love and seek him with her.

In this commendation, she, (1.) Asserts Christ's preferableness in the general, *verse 10.* (2.) She confirms and illustrates it in particulars, to *verse 16.* And then, (3.) *verse 16.* sums it up in an universal expression, as being in its particulars inexpressible. Lastly, Having fully proved her assertion, she resumes the conclusion as unanswerable, *This (saith she) is my Beloved*: A singular Beloved indeed; and therefore it is no wonder that I am so serious in pursuing after him, and so sick of love to him, and so much pained at the very heart for the want of him.

The first general in this *10. verse* sets out Christ positively, and comparatively: Do you ask (saith she) what my Beloved is? He is a non-such, an incomparable Beloved, *he is white and ruddy*; O so lovely as he is in himself, and being compared with all others, he hath the pre-eminence by far, as being *the chiefest among ten thousands*. By *white and ruddy*, we are to conceive Christ's qualifications, according to the strain of the allegory, there being no bodily qualification set out here, Christ at that time not being incarnate, yet even then was he *white and ruddy*: The due and just mixture of these colours maketh a man lovely, and evidenceth a good complexion of body; so by them

in Christ is understood a concurrence of all fit qualifications and excellencies, that may make him lovely to the soul, when by faith looked upon, and taken up: there is sweet beauty and comeliness, or a comely, beautiful sweetness, that lusters and shines in him, through the excellent qualifications wherewith he is furnished, as the Husband of his Church, that ravisheth spiritual affections far beyond the greatest beauty that can be in the fairest face; for indeed he is fairer than the sons of men: There is nothing that may make a Mediator lovely, but it is here. Again, as if that did not fully set out his amiableness, she adds, *He is the chiefest among ten thousand*: This is a definite great number for an indefinite. In sum it is this, *There are many beloveds indeed in the world, but compare them all with Christ, they are nothing to him; without all controversy he is the chiefest.* 1 Cor. 8. 5, 6. For, though there be gods many, and lords many (to the world) yet to us there is but one God, and one Lord Jesus; in all the world there is but one Christ. The word used here is, *He is the standard-bearer*, or it may be rendred passively, *He is standarded* above ten thousand; all tending to the same scope: Love kythes its rhetorick in seeking words to prefer Christ, as having indignation that his precedency and pre-eminence (who is *above all things*, Col. 1. 17.) should so much as once be questioned. It is like, that in these times the most comely persons were chosen to carry the standard, a piece of dignity being thereby put upon them: So then, if all the most choice, comely, and excellent persons in the world were mustered together, Christ would be preferred eminently and deservedly above them all. Whence, observe, 1. That Christ is the most lovely and excellent Object that men can set their eyes on, that they can cast their love and affection upon: There is not such an one as Christ, either for the spiritual soul-ravishing beauty that is in him, or the excellent desirable effects that flow from him. O what a singular description is it which follows, if it were understood! 2. Christ is the most singularly excellent Husband that ever was closed with; under that relation he is commended here, as singularly lovely and loving: It is a most honourable, comfortable, happy, and every way satisfying match, to have him for a Husband. 3. Christ's worth in itself is not expressible; and whatever he can be compared with, he doth exceedingly surpass it. 4. Where right thoughts of Christ are, there is nothing admitted to compete with him; other excellencies and beloveds are in their greatest beauty darkned beside him; he is set up as chief, and they are not to be taken notice of beside him, but to be accounted *loss and dung*. 5. Christ's absence, when believers are right, will never lessen their esteem of him, but even then believers will be warm and fresh in their love to him, and high in their esteem of him. 6. Neither will the great mistakes of others shake believers that have a thorow esteem of Christ's worth, but will rather with holy zeal awake them to

to commend him the more. 7. As where there is true love to Christ, there Christ will be lovely; so when he is looked on as lovely, that makes the heart to flow and abound with holy rhetorick in commendations of him. 8. True love to Christ, and to others for his sake, will not suffer one to despise the weakness of another, but make them rather take occasion from it, to honour him, and edify them so much the more; as the Bride doth here in answering the question proposed. 9. The more nearly and fully any thing be compared with Christ, tho' it be otherwise lovely, yet then it will be seen to be nothing, he so infinitely excels all things he can be compared with; and it is ignorance of him that makes other things get such a place in mens affections: but, when once they are set for-gainst him, he is found preferable, as incomparably chief, for dignity, riches, and satisfaction, or whatsoever is delightful, desirable and truly excellent, *verse 11, 12, 13, &c.*

She passeth from the general, to demonstrate it in particulars, and therein she insists in the following verses. If it should be asked, Why she descends into particulars, especially now, considering her deserted case? I answer, for these good reasons, 1<sup>st</sup>, That she might the more fully demonstrate, and the more satisfyingly unfold Christ's worth: For, his worth cannot be soon nor easily told, nor conceived, nor soon believed by others; it needs to be demonstrated, amplified and insisted upon; yet, his worth can bide the trial: There is no truth may more fully and demonstratively be made out than this, that Christ is a most excellent object of love, and infinitely preferable to all others. 2<sup>dly</sup>, This is for the edifying of the daughters of *Jerusalem*; and in reference to their question, that they might be the more convinced and satisfied anent the incomparable worth, and matchless excellency of her Beloved, she brancheth it forth, and insists upon it, that so a deeper impression of it might be left upon their hearts. *Obs.* 1. There is nothing more useful for the gaining and edifying of others, than to help them to the right uptaking of Christ's worth. 2. That is a great part of the work, that shou'd take up Christians in their fellowship together, to be spending their mutual conferences on that subject, for one anothers instruction. 3. To edify another, is no diversion from pursuing after him, to souls that love Christ, and would be helped by others to meet with him: this is well consistent with their pursuing after sensible presence for her self, to stay a while instructing them. A 3<sup>rd</sup> reason of her insisting, is, that it is suitable unto, and agrees well with her own sad condition; when he is away, she loves to think and speak of him, and of his loveliness, and that gives her some ease. *Obs.* Where love to Christ is, there will be a delight in speaking of him, and setting out his commendation, even when he is absent; it is a kind of ease to tell over his qualifications when he is absent. 2. It is a good diversion under a deserted condition

tion, and a suitable way to an outgate, to be dwelling rather upon the excellency of Christ, than on the comfortless aggravations of our own sad condition; this is more honourable to Christ, more edifying to others, and more pleasant to our selves: O, it is sweet to think of him! It is more useful also for confirming of our faith in him, for warming our affections to him, and for keeping the mind stayed in dependence on him for the outgate: Every attribute, or property of his, is a cordial to a soul fainting under a deserted case. 4. Her insisting on this subject, shews the nature of true love to Christ, that a soul affected with it, being once entred to speak of this theme or subject (namely the excellency of Christ) it expatiates in it, and is not soon withdrawn from it: This (to say so) is the very native element of it; and it doth the heart good to enumerate, and tell over distinctly, the commendable qualifications and excellencies of Christ: all which (being his own) are unpeakably delightful and refreshing to reckon. If there were any good measure of love to Christ in mens hearts, they would not be easily withdrawn from meditating on him, nor from speaking of him; and the great haunt that other things have in our heart, and the rarity of any expression that tends to Christ's commendation, shews plainly, that there are (alas!) other beloveds abounding with us beside him.

In opening of the following particulars, we would consider, 1. The scope, which is to demonstrate, that Christ Jesus is altogether lovely and desirable, beyond all other things that the hearts of men are set upon: The question proposed, *verse* 9. and the closing answer to it, *verse* 16. makes this clear. This then being the scope, these particulars must be so taken up, as they best contribute to clear this scope, and so must necessarily imply the excellencies that are in Jesus Christ, the Mediator himself being as the body, and the several qualifications, properties and excellencies wherewith he is furnished, being as the several members, and parts of that body. Now, seeing Jesus Christ is so excellent himself, and these being instanced as the choice excellencies that are in him, they must needs be exceeding and passing excellent, as the aggreging and heightning of every commendation doth shew: There will be need therefore of much sobriety, holy admiration and reverence in the opening of them, lest we spill so excellent a subject as is the transcendent excellency of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2. That the Spirit intends, by these parts, distinct considerations of Christ's loveliness in so many distinct particulars, seems also to be without all question; for, the particular enumeration is brought in to demonstrate this general, that he is the chiefest among ten thousand, which is done (as it were) by an induction of so many commendable things that are in him. Beside, in other scriptures, and especially, *Rev.* 1. 13, 14. where our Lord is thus considered, and also in the second and third

third chapter of that book of the *Revelation*, particular respect is had to the foresaid description, and these parts are there (being equivalent to them that are here mentioned) expounded of divers attributes and properties of his, and not unlike in many things to the description following, as the particulars will clear. Consider, 3. That it is both difficult and dangerous to be peremptory in the application of these particulars to the object described; it being so exceeding glorious, and the Spirit's expressions so very comprehensive, we dare not so limit the words to one thing, as if they were exclusive of another; nor say, this is meant and no other thing, altho' such and such things, as have a necessary connection with the scope to confirm it, may warrantably be included, and for instances pitched upon, especially, when from the analogy that is in the expressions which are borrowed, and from other scriptures, we have some ground to fix upon: but to be sure, the words would be so taken up, as they best afford the most solid general doctrines, which are sometimes (because of our darkness, and to prevent our curiosity) to be rested in; for, whatever be meant, it is Christ, and he by these commendations is set forth as much excellent: That all these are to describe a divine person, and no humane body, we conceive so clear, that it needs no advertisement. 4. All these parts hold him forth, not only as excellent in himself, but as lovely to his people; and as making up their privilege and happiness in having an interest in him to be theirs: and therefore, as this is the scope, so it is to be applied as setting out his excellency, and the blessedness of all that have him for theirs; as, on the contrary, to cry down all beloveds of the world, of whom these things cannot be said, for they are singularly peculiar to him.

Verse 11. *His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.*

There are ten parts mentioned, that are brought in as proofs of Christ's singular excellency, each of them almost having a double commendation: two of them are in the 11. verse. The first is, *his head*, the most eminent part of the body, that furnisheth influence and direction to all the rest: It may signify (if we dare adventure) these three in Christ, 1. His Godhead, which is the most eminent nature of Christ's person, sustaining the other, and furnishing it for its office. Thus, 1 Cor. 11. 3. *As the head of the woman is the man*, in respect of his dignity; so *the head of Christ is God*, as the Godhead dwells in him bodily, Col. 2. 9. by a wonderful and unspeakable personal union, the like whereof is not to be found in any other. 2. It may hold out Christ's headship, or sovereignty, which he hath as Mediator, being made

head of the body, the church, and over all things for the church, Eph. 1. 12. and his instalment into this office, is the rise of all the other commendations that follow, which are as parts thereof: Thus *Nebuchadnezzar's* sovereignty, as being a king of kings, is set out by a *head of gold*, Dan. 2. 32, 38. 3. It may signify the qualifications, wherewith he, as head to the body, is furnished for its behoof and good; so he is an excellent head for contriving of what is for the good of the body, and for furnishing life and motion to all his members; thus, Eph. 4. 16. he is the head, from whom the whole body, being fitly compacted together, doth make increase of it self in love: And to this purpose, a man of great reach, and profound wit, useth to be called a great head. All these agree with the scope, being instances of Christ's excellencies, and also with the commendation following; yet, the first seems most agreeable to the analogy of head and members: and it is not unlike that Christ's Godhead is begun at in his commendation; surely it cannot be excluded, seeing, in Rev. 1. 14. by his head (as there described) is set forth his eternity, the same nature may well be here understood, tho' Christ be otherwise represented in the colour of his locks; because, here he is described as a lovely Bridegroom, there as coming to judge; as also in Dan. 7. but it must be some excellent thing that is meant, as the commendation annexed clears. His head is, *as the most fine gold*: In the original, there are two words indifferently made use of, to signify gold; the first, because of its shining brightness and beauty; the second is applied to it, because of its solidity and firmness: so it runs, *his head is gold of gold, or gold and gold, or fine shining and solid gold*; as if gold were not enough to set out the excellency of this head. Gold is rich in the quality, solid and strong as to the efficacy, (as in chap. 3. 10.) sovereign as to usefulness and profitableness; it is above other mettals, and so in the heavenly Jerusalem, the streets are said to be of pure gold, Rev. 21. 21. Therefore that dominion of *Nebuchadnezzar's*, spoken of Dan. 2. 32. is compared to a *head of gold*, for its excellency above the rest that followed, and especially for the shelter that the Church of God had under it: And this being *gold of gold*, must hold forth such sovereignty, riches of grace, solidity and happiness, as is unsearchable; gold cannot reach it, no, not gold raised to the highest worth conceivable.

This first particular may put us to a stand, when (as it were) the Bride is at a stand in the commendation, and must double the word, *as gold, gold*; and it's hard to draw observations from it, yet warrantably this may be said, 1. Christ hath a head (however we take it) that is exceedingly excellent; he is God, and in that respect is unsearchable, being the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. 1. 3. He, as Mediator, is furnished with sovereignty and eminent graces for the good of the body; and these,

as:

as they are for their nature most solid and excellent, so as to their vertue they are most efficacious and quickning. 2. If we take it in general, *Obs.* That the excellencies, wherewith Christ is furnished, are in the highest degree of excellency; therefore it is gold of gold, whatever it be: and this general will necessarily infer the former, that he is God and Mediator, and in such and such offices furnished for the good of his people; and the former doctrine is the proof of this: all Christ's properties, wisdom, love, counsel, &c. are of more than an ordinary depth, being in him to the very uttermost, Heb. 7. 25. and *without measure*, John 3. 34. 3. Christ's excellency is not only lovely in it self, but useful to others; he is not only rich in himself, but enriching these that possess him, as gold doth enrich the owners of it: Christ is a golden possession, where there is a well-grounded claim to him. 4. Gold, and all external riches, are empty things to a spiritual discerner of Christ's worth; as it were, a new sort of gold must be invented, or imagined, to shadow forth the excellencies of Christ: gold it self is but an insufficient and dark shadow to represent him; whoever loves gold, may have (and that freely) the most fine and choice gold in him. Yea, 5. This is peculiar to him, in opposition to all other beloveds: mens idols and other beloveds may be gilded, like the *whore's cup*, spoken of, *Rev.* 17. 4. but Christ only is the *golden* Beloved; for, this is so attributed to him, as it is denied to them, which are but *clay*, or *thick clay* beloveds, *Hab.* 2. 6.<sup>on</sup>

The *second* thing commended is *his locks*, which are no essential part of the body, yet are (when lovely) a special decorment, and ever have been so esteemed: The signification of locks (being joined to the head) will be so much the more clear, if we consider the commendation given them, which is three-fold, 1. *They are bushy*, or curled; not such as old men have, hairs here and there, but his are bushy, thick and handsom, such as young men in the flower and vigour of their youth use to have. 2. *They are black*: And that, 3. *As a raven*: Black hair in these times and places was comely in men, and betokens strength of youth, and vigour of age. Therefore, the same word, which is here blackness, signifieth youth also in the *Hebrew*, as, *Eccles.* 11. 10. *childhood and youth*, &c. So, black hair, here, is opposed to white hairs, whereby decay is signified, (as *Hosea* 7. 9. by *gray hairs* on *Ephraim*, is understood) and thus all other idols get a dash, as if they were gray hair'd, decaying beloveds; but Christ is always in youth and vigour, he continues always vigorous, as his love is alway green. They are compared to the blackness of a *raven*, because that is native black, and lovely beyond other things that are black. As by Christ's *head* then was signified that which is in Christ (to speak so) most intrinsically excellent; so here, by *locks*, we understand the most extrinsic thing that is in him (if we may say any thing of Christ is so) that is, if any thing

thing seem less necessary than another, yet is it in it self excellent, and serves to commend Christ to others. And again, by *bushiness* and *blackness*, we understand the vigour and perfection of Christ's lovely and desirable excellencies, that as loveliness and desirableness are in a man, when in his youth, at their height and perfection, so are they in Christ, with all commendable aggravations, as in their very prime and vigour. *Gold* did set forth the intrinsic worth of Christ's qualifications; this aggregates it so, that it lifts up that worth to the highest pitch that is conceivable: As a lovely man is yet loveliest in the flower of his age and youth, so it is with Christ, his perfections are ever in their flower, and never decays, nor does he ever fail in the exercising of them for his peoples good, *Isa. 42. 4. He shall not fail nor be discouraged*; and, as *Rev. 1. 12.* Christ's eternity is holden forth by *white hairs*, so by *black hairs* is signified his continuing young, vigorous and flourishing (to say so) through all eternity; which serves much to the scope of commending Christ; for, whatever is attributed to him, is in an implied way denied to all other beloveds: Otherwise he were not the chiefest among them, and preferable to them all, which is the scope. *Obs. 1st.* There is nothing for compleating Christ's beauty but it is in him; yea, even these things in him, that are least taken notice of by us (though nothing in him be little in it self) they are in themselves, and in their use when discerned, exceeding lovely; his *locks*, yea, all his *garments* are so, *Psal. 45. 8.* There is nothing superfluous, and useless in our blessed Bridegroom. *2dly.* What perfections are in Christ (as there are none wanting) they are in him in their perfection: What unspeakable commendation is here? (1.) He hath infinite numbers of perfections. (2.) All these are rich, like the *most fine gold*. (3.) If there be a season (to speak so) wherein these perfections may be conceived more lovely and shining than another (for in themselves they are ever the same) they are so in our Lord Jesus Christ; it is ever harvest, summer and youth with him; he is that tree spoken of *Rev. 22. 2.* which bears fruit always: This Sun is ever at the height, and never goes down. Christ's perfections are continuing perfections; He is a Beloved that never decays, that never waxeth sick, weak, nor old; but is ever in youth, with his hair black, although he be eternal, and the Ancient of days, for all his properties are unchangeably in him, and ever agree to him, even now as well as in *Solomon's* time, and will do so for ever: This is good and very comfortable to his people; Christ sits not up nor fails; his Spouse weeps not for the death, decay, or waxing old of her Beloved and Husband, which can be said of no other. *3dly.* All other beloveds, beside Christ, are decaying beloveds, they evanish and are growing gray-headed; even all this clay-world shall wax *old as doth a garment*, and the beauty of it shall be stained, and it will become weak, like an old dying harlot, with whom many hath gone a whoring;

ing: For, if this, to be black and bushy, be peculiar to Christ, it cannot agree to them; for, *they shall wax old, but he is the same*, Psal. 102. 27. which words are peculiarly applied to Christ, *Heb. 1. 10.* 4thly, This continued flourishing of Christ's excellency in its perfection, doth put Christ supereminently above all compare, as having no match amongst all beloveds; they decay, but he is the same; they are broken cisterns, and can hold no water of comfort, and appear with no beauty at death and judgment, and through eternity they will be as clothes worn and failed; but, Christ is fresh and vigorous at death to the believer, and will be so for ever: How blessed are they, when they come to eat of the tree of life, that never wants fruit, to possess him, who is *yesterday, to day, and for ever the same, God over all, blessed for evermore!* O the happiness! the eternal happiness, that there is in being espoused to Christ, when the breath of all clay-idols and beloveds will be out, and Christ still fresh in the communicating of his fulness to his people! O what a sad heart will many have, who have forsaken this fountain of living waters, and chosen such broken cisterns to themselves as the creatures are, that have set their heart on *that which is not*, Prov. 23. 5. and *laboured for the wind*, Eccles. 5. 16. loading themselves with thick clay, Habak. 2. 6. and have neglected him who gave, and who continues the being of all things, and who then will be, when they will not be found, or have a being! *In sum (saith she) my Beloved is the golden beloved, others are but of clay and earth; my Beloved is in his flower, and youth; other beloveds are decaying, waxing old, and drawing to their grave, therefore is he incomparable beyond them all.*

Verse 12. *His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.*

The third thing commended in him, is in *verse 12.* and it is *his eyes*, which are several ways described. Eyes in the natural body are the organs, whereby we discern external objects: the Lord, as he is a Spirit, hath no body, nor bodily members; but eyes are attributed to him, to hold forth his omniscience, who, having *formed the eye, cannot but see*, Psal. 94. 9. and therefore eminently is said to see, in opposition to the idols, *who have eyes and see not*, Ps. 115. 5. This, then, sets out our Lord's omniscience, before whom *all things are naked and open*, Heb. 4. 3. even the most secret things are open to his view, as if by the most sharp-sighted bodily eye he did behold them, and much more; so, Prov. 15. 3. *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good*: and, Prov. 5. 21. *The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord*; he knows them, as if he were looking on them with eyes, all things are so naked and discernable to him: This agrees also with that, *Rev. 2. 18.* where Christ

is

is said to have eyes as a flame of fire : which title, *verse 23.* is expounded (as all these titles throughout these epistles are) and said to be given him, that men may know that he *searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins*; even the most inward things are fully reached by his all-seeing eye.

The excellency of his eyes (or omniscience thereby pointed out) is held forth under several similitudes, *First*, They are as doves eyes, such as were attributed to the Bride, *chap. 4. 1.* that is, eyes that are quick, lovely and loving, having much affection in them to his own. *Secondly*, They are as doves eyes by the rivers of water, where doves are most lovely after their washing, or bathing and beeking of themselves at river-sides. *Thirdly*, They are washed with milk, that is, most clean, white and pure. *Fourthly*, They are fitly set, or (as the word is) set in fulness, like the stones in Aaron's breast-plate, *Exod. 39. 10.* (where the same word is) signifying that there is no deformity in them, but, like curious jewels, they are most equally and beautifully set, being neither too hollow, nor sticking too far out, which are the two extreme deformities in eyes. In sum, it saith, *1st*, That Christ's knowledge is sharp and piercing. *2dly*, Pure and clean. *3dly*, Pleasant to his people to look on. And, *4thly*, That it is kindly vented, and well qualified for the good of his people, whereby he is made exceeding lovely to them. These notes are sure here, 1. That our Lord Jesus is omniscient, knowing all the designs of enemies, knowing all the straits and necessities of his people; he actually takes notice of all these. 2. Christ's omniscience is one of his chiefest excellencies, that qualifies him for the good and comfort of his people, and doth exceedingly commend him to them above all others: It is a very pleasant comfort to his people, especially in the time of trouble, that their Beloved knows all, what we are, what we have need of, and what is good for us, and what is designed to our prejudice by any of all our adversaries, and cannot mistake. 3. Christ's omniscience, though it be terrible to his enemies (so his eyes are as a flame of fire) yet it is very amiable to his people, his eyes to them are as doves eyes; his all-seeing knowledge is kindly and comfortable, and exercised for their good (as all his other attributes are) and is still on work for their good and advantage, *2 Chron. 16. 9.* His eyes run to and fro throughout the earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them, whose heart is perfect towards him. He takes notice of the case of his own, that he may succour them in their wants; as he takes notice of his enemies, that he may disappoint and bring them down. 4. When the tie of the covenant with Christ is once fastned, these attributes in him which are most terrible to flesh, and to men in nature, are exceeding lovely, and make Christ beautiful to his people; as his omniscience, justice, faithfulness, &c. 5. As it is our duty, so it is our advantage, to walk under the conviction of Christ's omniscience, and to converse before him with the faith

faith of his beholding what we are doing. 6. It is a good evidence of sincerity, when his omniscience becomes delightful to us, and when the heart is made glad with this, that Christ knows the secrets thereof; as *Peter* speaks, *Jo. 2:17. Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee*: It is much to abide Christ's search, as omniscient, contentedly. 7. All other idols and beloveds are blind, they have no eyes; or, tho' they seem to have, *they see not*, *Psal. 115:5.* that is, they can take no notice of, nor give any succour to their worshippers: Our Lord's eyes, that are upon his people, make him singularly preferable to all that come in competition with him. 8. It is a singular commendation of Christ's knowledge, that it is pure and holy, that it cannot approve of sin, nor take any complacency in it; for, his eyes are *as doves eyes, by the rivers of waters, washed with milk*: He is of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity. O how doth he delight in purity! and what a strong motive may and ought this to be with his people, to make a covenant with their eyes, that they get not leave to wander and gadd on sinful objects!

Verse 13. *His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrhe.*

The fourth and fifth instances of Christ's loveliness are in this verse. The fourth is, that *his cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers*: The cheeks, being comely, are a special part of the loveliness of the face. His cheeks are here commended from two things, *First*, They are *as a bed of spices*, that is, like garden-beds furnished with excellent smelling and refreshful spices: It sets out, 1. A proportionable height of them, as cheeks are in the face, and as beds are higher than the rest of the ground. 2. A preciousness and sweetness of spirit-refreshing savour, as such beds use to yield to these who walk in a garden. The second commendation is, *as sweet flowers*; or, as the words may be read, *as towers of perfume*: It tends to the same purpose, but holds forth an abundance of delight to the spiritual sense of smelling in the believer, when Christ is made the Object of it; O the sweet savour he finds in him! It is fit to be sober here, these excellencies being mysteries: It is not unlike, that lesser glimpses of Christ's manifestations, whereby he makes himself known, may be understood here; as if she said, *He is so lovely, that the least glimpse or waff of him, when it is seen, if it were but of his cheek, is very delightful*: And this sense may be gathered, 1st, From this, that the cheek is a part of the face and countenance, yet not the full countenance: Now, by seeing his face, and beholding his countenance, often in scripture (and it is like also, *verse 15.*) is understood his most sensible manifestations of himself to his people; by proportion then the cheeks would hold forth the same, tho' in a lesser

fer measure and lower degree. 2<sup>dly</sup>, It makes well for the scope of commending Christ above all, whose incomparable worth, by his manifestations, is much evidenced and confirmed to his people; and when a little glimpse of him doth this, how much more would a full view of him demonstrate it? And indeed such a view doth effectually demonstrate it to these who have experimentally known the excellency that is in him, altho' others, who are unacquaint with his face, do therefore undervalue him; which may be hinted at, as a cause of their so doing. 3<sup>dly</sup>, This agrees with the commendation, which sets him forth in this as pleasant to the spiritual sense of smelling; and so would imply, that it must be somewhat whereby Christ becomes sensibly sweet and refreshful, as his sensible manifestations make him more delightfom and refreshing to the soul's senses, than towers of perfume are to the bodily senses: Therefore is his love compared to *ointment*, chap. 1. 3. and elsewhere. However, these things are certain, 1. That the least glimpse of Christ's countenance is exceeding refreshful and savoury to the spiritual senses. 2. That Christ's excellencies are delightfom to all the spiritual senses, to the smell as well as to the eye, ear, &c. The whole soul, and all its faculties have abundant matter in him, for delighting and refreshing them all. 3. The moe senses be exercised on Christ, and the more sensible (to speak so) he become unto us, he will be the more lovely and pleasant: Beds of spices, and towers of perfume in a garden, to them that ly amongst them, are not so savoury as Christ is, when the senses of the soul are exercised to discern him.

The *fifth* thing instanced is *his lips*; the Bride's lips were spoken of, chap. 4. 3, 11. and cleared to signify her speech: By proportion they hold forth in him the loveliness of his word, wherein he is especially lovely, in that he *magnifies it above all his Name*, Psal. 138. 2. and makes it often sweet as the hony and the hony-comb to his people. This may be looked on, 1<sup>st</sup>, As it respects the matter spoken by him, out of whose mouth many *gracious words* proceeded (while in the flesh) even to the admiration of his hearers, Luke 4. 22. so that upon conviction they say, *Never man spoke as this man speaks*, John 7. 46. Or, 2<sup>dly</sup>, It may look to Christ's manner of speaking, and his fitness to communicate his mind to his people (as lips are the organs of speaking) so he hath *grace poured into his lips*, Psal. 45. 2. that makes all his words gracious, as being formed or anointed by it. Thus it takes in that holy art, skill and dexterity, wherewith Christ is furnished, to speak for the consolation of a believer, especially under sad exercises; as it is, Isa. 50. 4. *He hath the tongue of the learned, to speak a word in season to him that is weary*: Both these in the result come to one; and this being a special piece of Christ's loveliness to his people, conducing exceedingly to the Bride's scope here, and the analogy being clear, and *lips* being frequently made use of in scripture to signify speech

or

or words, we conceive that they may well be taken so here, especially considering, that all the parts of the commendation will agree well to his words. 1. They are *like lilies*, that is, pleasant and savory ; so words spoken in season are often called *pleasant and sweet like hony*, Prov. 16. 24. yea, they are said to be *like apples of gold in pictures of silver*, Prov. 25. 11. His words then may well be compared to lilies. 2. They are not common words, therefore it must not be ordinary lilies that will set them forth ; but they are like *lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrhe* : Such lilies we are not acquaint with ; and nature, tho' excellent in its effects, yet comes short in furnishing fit resemblances to represent Christ, and what is in him, to the full. These *lilies dropping myrrhe* signify, 1<sup>st</sup>, A savoriness and cordial efficacy in the matter, like myrrhe proving comfortable to these it falls or drops upon. 2<sup>dly</sup>, *Dropping* shews abundance, seasonableness, and continuedness therein, so as he still furnisheth such strengthening efficacy and influence, as if it were ever dropping, and never dried up ; as the phrase was, chap. 4. 11. All these agree well, either to Christ the speaker, who never wants a seasonable word ; or to the word spoken, which, in respect of its effects, endures for ever. *This must be an excellent Beloved* (saith she) *who speaks much, and never a word falls from his lips, but it is precious and savory, like any cordial to the souls of his people, especially in their fainting fits : and there is ever some good word to be gotten from him, far from the rough speeches that many uses ; but O so pleasant and kindly as all his words are !* Obs. 1. There is a special loveliness in our Lord Jesus's words to his people ; how much of this appears throughout the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of this Song ? and what love appears in all his promises, yea, in the titles that he gives his people ? every one is (as it were) big with child of strong consolation to them. 2. Christ's words have a special refreshing efficacy in them, and can comfort, refresh and sustain drooping sick souls ; he sends out his word, and and it healeth them. 3. These, who love Christ himself truly, have also an high esteem of his word, and are much delighted with that ; and where there is little esteem of his word, there is but little esteem of himself : They, who have tasted the sweetness of the word, do highly esteem of Christ himself. 4. The word of Christ is as Christ's own lips, and doth sweetly set out his thoughts of love to sinners : It is good reading of Christ's loveliness out of his own word, and from his own mouth. 5. Where there hath been a sweetness felt in the word, it should be turned over to the commendation of Christ that spoke it, as a proof of the reality of his excellent worth. 6. The word is never rightly made use of, tho' it should fill the head with knowledge, till it be savory to the inward man and spiritual senses ; and it is that which makes it lovely, when the vertue and consolation that flows from it is felt. 7. All the consolations of the word, they come not out at once, neither can we so

receive them, but it drops by little and little in continuance; and therefore daily should men draw from these wells of salvation. 8. Observe from the scope, that Christ's word, known by experience, will lift and set Christ up in the heart beyond all beloveds; and that the unacquaintedness of many with Christ's lips, and the consolations that abound in his word, makes them so ready to slight him, and set up their idols above him. The scope saith further, that she was acquaint with his words, and the refreshfulness of them; and in this she is differenced from others. Whence observe, 9. That believers are acquaint with the sweetness of Christ's words, otherwise than any in the world are; Christ is another thing to them, and his word is so also, than to all the world beside: It is a good sign, where Christ's lips are so lovely.

**Verse 14.** *His hands are as gold-rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.*

The sixth and seventh particulars instanced, to commend Christ, are in *verse 14.* The sixth is, *His hands*: The hands are the instruments of action, as the lips are of speaking: they are commended, that they are as *gold-rings*, that is, as men or womens hands are adorned with gold-rings, so his hands have a native loveliness beyond these. Yet this commendation (as all the former) answers not fully; therefore it is added, they are *set with beryl*: This was a precious stone put in Aaron's breast-plate, *Exod. 39. 13.* To be set with it, signifies, as preciousness, so rare artifice; and such is seen in the right setting of precious stones. By our Lord's hands, may be understood that powerful activity whereby he is fitted to bring about what he pleaseth, and that power which he exerciseth especially in the works of grace, as on *ver. 4.* was cleared: Or, we may understand the effects produced by that his power, or his works which are exceeding glorious; as, *Psal. 109. 27.* *That they may know, O Lord, that this is thy hand,* that is, *that thou, Lord, hast done it.* So his hands signify such works especially, wherein his divine power, art and skill do manifest themselves for the good of his people: Both agree well together; for, excellent power and skill produce excellent effects, and excellent effects demonstrate the excellent qualifications of the worker. This being a main piece of Christ's commendation, and which doth hold him forth to be exceeding lovely above all to the believer, (which is the scope) may well be taken here as the meaning, especially being subjoined to the commendation of his words: For, our Lord Jesus doth not only say well, but also doth well; he is a *Prophet, mighty both in word and deed, Luke 24. 19.*

The commendation suits with his works, as if there were none of them, but what are adorned (as it were) with excellent gold-rings, there being much glory,

glory, grace, wisdom and skill shining in them all; they are honourable and glorious, Psal. 111. 3. yea, great and marvelous are the works of the Lord God almighty, Rev. 15. 4. These are the deserved epithets of his actions: In sum, it is, as if she had said, *Ask ye what my Beloved is more than others? If ye saw but a glimpse of the white and red that is in his cheeks, and if ye heard the sweet words that proceed from his mouth, and if ye knew the excellent works which he hath performed, even to admiration, for the good of his people, and how much loveliness appears in all these, ye would (no doubt) say with me, He is the chiefest among ten thousand.*

*Obs.* 1. Christ is an active husband, having hands, and working with them for the good of his Bride; a piece of his work we heard of, chap. 3. 9. in that noble chariot: He is no idle spectator; he *worketh hitherto*, John 5. 17. 2. All our Lord Jesus his works are exceeding excellent and beautiful; and, when rightly discerned, they will appear wonderful, honourable and glorious, as proceeding from him *who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working*, Isa. 28. 29. What a curious and excellent piece of work is that chariot, or the covenant of redemption signified thereby, chap. 3. 9? There are many shining well set jewels, and rings upon every finger of his hands: There is nothing that can be done better than what he hath done. The works of Christ, in our redemption, do hold forth infinite skill and gloriousness to be in the worker, all of them are so wisely contrived, and exquisitely execute. 3. Christ's works do exceedingly endear him, and that deservedly, to his people; and do infallibly demonstrate his worth above all beloveds in the world: Who is like unto him? and who can do great works, such as he hath done? This makes heaven to resound with the praises of what this Beloved hath done for his people. 4. Believers would be acquaint both with Christ's words and his works, and would be well versed in the knowledge of the excellencies that are in them both, that so they may be the more affected with him themselves, and be more able to commend him to others. 5. Where Christ is lovely, all his works will be delightful: and it is by acquaintance with, and observation of his excellent works, that the hearts of his people come to take him up, and to be rightly affected with him. 6. As ignorance of the excellency of Christ's works (especially of the work of redemption) makes many slight Christ, and prefer others to him (for, she would discover the daughters of *Jerusalem* their mistake of him, by instancing this amongst other things) so it is a kindly-like thing, to have a honourable esteem of Christ's works in the heart. 7. Altho' the devil and mens idols seem to promise much to their lovers, when they suit and intice them; yet never one indeed can equal Christ, or compare with him, in respect of what he hath done for his Bride; and this sets him up incomparably above them all: His hands, in

respect of his magnificent works, are adorned, as it were, with gold-rings; whereas *they have hands, but work not for the help and relief of their lovers,* *Psal. 115. 7.*

The *seventh* part of this demonstration of Christ's worth, is from his *belly*: The word in the original is the same word, which *verse 4.* is rendred *bowels*; and we rather use it so here as it signifieth *bowels*, the native signification of it, as not knowing why it should be altered in this verse; especially considering, that, wherever it is attributed to God, it is translated *bowels*, as, *Isa. 63. 15. Where is the sounding of thy bowels?* And *Jer. 31. 20. My bowels are moved for him*: reading it then thus, *his bowels are as bright ivory*, &c. The words, at the very first, would seem to signify the intense love and tender affection, wherewith our Lord Jesus (who is full of grace) is filled and stuffed (to say so) for the behoof and good of his people; so that no mother is so compassionately affected towards the fruit of her womb, as he is towards his own. This exposition is, 1. confirmed from the ordinary signification of the word *bowels*, when it is applied to God; as, *Isa. 63. 15.* and *Jer. 31. 20.* and it is borrowed from the affection that mothers have to their children, whose bowels yern on them, as, *1 Kings 3. 26.* and so *Joseph* was affected toward his brethren, *Gen. 43. 30.* Hence the word, both in the *Hebrew* and *Greek*, in the Old and New Testament, which is made use of to set forth the Lord's tender compassion, flows from a root that signifieth bowels. 2. The scope will confirm this: for, is there any thing that makes Christ more lovely and admirable than his love? which makes the prophet cry out, *Mic. 7. 18. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?* &c. *because thou delights in mercy*; or, is there any other thing that more commends him, as a Beloved preferable to all, than his love? Love in a husband is a special property: Now, *Christ loved his Church, and gave himself for it*, *Eph. 5. 25.* it is not like, therefore, that this is omitted. And, 3. It follows well on the commendation of his works for, and about his people, as shewing the fountain from whence they proceed: The commendation of this is excellent; 1. It is as *bright ivory*: *Ivory* is rarely and singularly pure and pleasant, being made of *Elephants teeth*: *bright*, is added, to shew, that it is of the best sort, as all that is in Christ is. 2. It is *overlaid with sapphires*; that was a stone in *Aaron's breast-plate*, and also is reckoned one of the foundation-stones of the *new Jerusalem*, *Rev. 21. 19.* which shews, that it is very precious, tho' we know not the particular properties of it: The word *overlaid*, may be from the original rendred *curiously set*, or *enameled*. In sum, here, his love is described as most lovely, clean and pleasant, like ivory; rich and precious like sapphires; and well ordered and wisely vented for the good of his people, as bright ivory curiously enameled with sapphires: His love is a most excellent, curious.

curious and pleasant object, the like whereof is not to be found amongst all the beloveds of the world. This verse commends Christ's heart and in-side, which is unsearchable as to its height, depth, breadth, and length: It may therefore be hard, and some way hazardous, to offer doctrines on, or to form expressions concerning that *which passeth knowledge*, Eph. 3. 18, 19. the comprehending experimental knowledge of it, will be the best commentary on it; yet these things are clear and safe,

1. There is singular love, affection and bowels in our Lord Jesus to his people; so singular, that there is none can compare with him in this, no husband, nay, nor wife, it passeth the love of women; no tender-hearted mother, and much less any idol, can compete with him in this; it is inconceivable in it self, and it is wonderful in its effects. 2. There is nothing that will contribute more to make believers see Jesus Christ as admirable in himself, and lovely to them, than the right apprehension of his love: This is the constraining, ravishing, engaging, and soul-inebriating consideration of Christ, the conceiving of him rightly in his admirable love; and they will never esteem of Christ rightly, who discern not that: It is (as it were) his crown; and the believing of it, is a in sort the putting of the crown on his head: Amongst all his excellencies, none takes the believer more up than his love, and nothing is more remarkable in him than that; and right thoughts of Christ's love is no ill token. 3. Our Lord Jesus, his love and bowels are a rich jewel when seen, a precious stately sight; bright ivory, overlaid with sapphires, is but a small and dark shadow of it; Christ's love is a possession beyond jewels, a very beautiful object to look on, beyond the most excellent creature! It is both a wonder and a heart-break that it is so little thought of, and that men are not more delighted in it. 4. Altho' there be much in many mouths of Christ's love, yet there are few that really knows and believes the love that he hath to his people, 1 John 3. 1. As this is the cause that so few loves him, and why so many sets up other beloveds beside him; so, the solid faith of this, and the expectation of good from him, hath a great engaging vertue to draw sinners to him, Heb. 11. 6. and for that end it is made use of here. 5. Whatever seeming smiles, idols may give to their lovers, yet will they not prove lovers in the end to them: for, that is proper to Christ, he only hath strong love and bowels of affection to his own to the end; but other lovers in the end will fail men: only our Lord Jesus continueth a loving Husband to the end; for, whom he loves, he loves to the end. 6. It is beyond all peradventure, good and desirable to be matched with Jesus Christ, where so much honour, riches, power, wisdom, loveliness and love meet all together; for, the scope of this, and of all the rest of the commendations, is to engage sinners to match with him. 7. There is no cause:

cause to be jealous of Christ's love; his people have a most loving Husband, and never a spot or ground of jealousy hath defiled his bowels since the world began, but they to this day are, and will be for ever *as bright ivory*. 8. Christ's love is excellent in it self, and is also excellent in the way of its communicating it self to his people; therefore, it is not as *saphires* that are confusedly casten together, but that are artificially set: Or, our Lord Jesus vents not his love fondly (to speak with reverence) or imprudently, but most wisely, skilfully and seasonably, so as it may be for the good of his people; not as a fond and too indulgent mother, that gives that which is even hurtful, because the child desires it, but as a wise father, who gives that which is useful, tho' it be unpleasant. He guides his love by discretion, and according to expediency; as, *John 16. 7.* It is *expedient for you that I go*, and therefore he will go, though they were even made sad with it. 9. Altho' some pieces of Christ's love, being considered in themselves, seem not so pleasant and lovely, like precious stones not rightly set; yet, when all are seen together, and every thing taken up as in its own place, and proportionably corresponding with one another, and especially in respect of the fountain of love from which they come, they will then (being all look'd on together) be seen to be very beautiful and pleasant, and well ordered, like *bright ivory*, that is regularly and curiously enameled, or indented with *saphires*. The time comes, when Christ's love will be thought to be exquisitely and wisely let out and conveyed, even in these things wherein it is most suspected now by his own.

**Verse 15.** *His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.*

The eighth and ninth particulars of Christ's commendation are in *verse 15*. The first of them here commended is *his legs*: The word *legs*, comes from a root in the original, that signifieth to walk; and so takes in thighs and feet, which are also useful in motion. In scripture, and by analogy, they are made use of to signify these two, *First*, A man's way in the series of his carriage and deportment, as ordinarily his life is called a walk: So, *Ecol. 5. 1.* *Take heed unto thy feet*, that is, to thy carriage; hence the *iniquities of the heels* are spoken of, *Psal. 49. 5.* to set out mens defects, that cleave to them in their conversation, as their feet leave prints or footsteps behind them, in their walking. *Secondly*, This metaphor signifieth strength and activity; as, *Psal. 147. 10.* *The Lord delights not in the strength of an horse, nor in the legs of a man;* wherefore (very probably) *Eccles. 12. 3.* they are called *the strong men*, because they sustain or bear up the body. Here, being applied to Christ, we conceive they

they signify his way, or administration of providence, which he useth with his people, it being by his dispensations that he walks amongst them. Hence the series of common providence is so often in scripture called the way of the Lord; as, *Ezek. 18. 25. The Lord's way is equal*; his carriage in his dispensations is still just, opposite to their way, or walk, which is there called unequal. And the dispensation of grace is called, a way, *Rom. 11. 33. How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out*; which take in the contrivance, and administration of his grace, as the scope there doth clear. His way is more general and comprehensive than his works, and takes in these three (for which it is called, a way.) 1. His design and end, that he proposeth to himself. 2. His wise and powerful plot, in contriving and applying means suitable thereunto, for bringing it about; especially the principle (to say so) by which he walks and works, *to wit*, his wisdom, power and love. 3. His convoy of, and the progress which he makes in these, by which he is ever proceeding towards his end, as a man doth in his way, by walking with his legs: In all these respects, the Lord's way of carrying on his design is said to be unsearchable: This we take, as intended here, to set forth and commend the gracious and glorious steps of the Lord, in the administration of his grace, both in its contrivance and application amongst his people, whereby his wisdom, power and goodness, are in these paths of his (that are *all mercy and truth* to his own, *Psal. 25. 10.*) made exceeding lovely and stately, as the commendation following imports. This is confirmed, 1<sup>st</sup>, By the analogy that is betwixt the legs and walking, and the frequent use that the scripture makes of this similitude for that end; and no other thing can suit so well. 2<sup>dly</sup>, In *Rev. 2. 18.* where Christ's legs and feet are spoken of, with a commendation not unlike what follows here, namely, that they are *like fine brass*. As his eyes are expounded, *verse 23.* by this, that *he searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins*; so his feet are set out by this, that *he renders to every one according to their works*, that is, he keeps an equal and just way in his administration towards every one. 3<sup>dly</sup>, The scope likewise confirms this, Christ being by his way to his people commendable above all, and this being a special commendation of his, that *all his works are perfect, and all his ways are judgment*, *Deut. 32. 4.* As also the property attributed to his legs, and from which they are commended, will clear this, which is, that they are *like pillars of marble*: Marble is a stone that is firm, good and pleasant; therefore was it prepared by David, for the temple, *1 Chron. 29. 2.* Pillars signify strength, orderliness and beauty, as was cleared on *chap. 3. 10.* which may be applied here: So, pillars of marble say, that his ways are curiously, skilfully and sickerly contrived; and wisely, dexterously and infallibly executed; and firmly settled like pillars, and that of marble, for unmoveableness. The amplification of the commendation

confirmss

confirms this also, they are not only like pillars of marble, but also like pillars set on sockets of fine gold; pillars are durable, according to the bases or foundation upon which they are set and founded: Now gold (as often hath been said) signifieth preciousness and solidity; so all of them are settled and fixed on a good and precious ground, which cannot fail, and therefore they cannot shake, slide, nor slip, but prosper he must in his ways; and nothing can marr his design, *for he is of one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, that he doth*, Job 23. 13. Yet not only are his feet or legs of brass, (which shews severity against enemies, in his treading on them, *Dan. 10. 6.*) but the sockets are of gold, as his head was, *verse 11.* all is of gold that is in him, he is a golden Mediator and Beloved from head to foot, whereas others are clay-beloveds: The sockets are of gold, to shew his graciousness to his people; as, *Psal. 25. 10. all his ways are settled on mercy and truth*; all his decrees anent them are made lovely and sure by grace, and so cannot be but precious and excellent as to them.

*Observ.* 1. Our Lord Jesus hath a design, a gracious design, that he is carrying on amongst his people, and he is ever promoting therein for the end which he hath proposed: he is not like the idols of the *Gentiles*, *Psal. 115. 7. which have feet and walk not*; but as he sees with his eyes, and works with his hands, so doth he walk and make progress with his legs. 2. Christ's way with his people, is a most excellent and stately way: Or, in all his convoy of grace towards his people, there is a special excellency shining; *All his ways and works are holy and righteous*, *Psal. 145. 17. Just and true*, *Rev. 15. 3.* Gracious and loving, even *all mercy and truth*; *Psal. 25. 10.* This King of saints is marvelous in his way of grace, as he is in all his works. 3. Christ's purpose cannot fail, neither can his design be altered; the contrivance thereof is so wise, and the execution so powerful, he cannot but attain his point. 4. However men may quarrel with Christ's way, and say it is *not equal*, as, *Ezek. 18. 25.* and altho' his way may be sometimes *in the deep waters*, and not discernable, *Psal. 77. 19.* yet, it is ever ordered in deep wisdom, that there can be nothing more just, holy and glorious, so that there is no reason to complain thereof; and this holds, not only in one step or two, but in the whole series of his way. 5. A right sight of Christ's wise, glorious and omnipotent way of grace, will make him singular in the estimation of his people, and put him above all other beloveds, whose ways are neither for wisdom, nor stability, any way comparable to his; for, all the counsels and designs of the world, beside his, will come to nought, and be made, nill they will they, subservient to his: clay-idols have their breath in their nostrils, and in that same very day, *when it goeth out, their thoughts perish*, *Psal. 146. 4.* but it is not so with his, they are more solidly founded, and these strong legs, that are of marble, can neither be

be bowed nor broken. It must then be most sure and safe for the Lord's people to drive this as their design, to side and share with Christ in his designs; and it must be a most desperate thing to drive contrary designs to him, whose *legs are as pillars of marble*, and before whom none can stand. 6. Where there is respect to Christ, there will be an high estimation of his way; and it is a good sign of an especial esteem of Christ, when his ways are admired and loved.

The *ninth* particular instance, brought to prove that he is the chiefest among ten thousand, is, that *his countenance is like Lebanon*. The word *countenance*, as it is in the original, comes from a root that signifieth to see; therefore, *countenance* is used in scripture, not only to signify the face, but the whole stature and presentation of a person, or that which gives a full sight of one in all his parts together; and so it is here, and differs from the cheeks, mentioned *verse 13.* as being more extensive and comprehensive: Therefore, that phrase, which, 2 Sam. 23. 12. is rendred *a goodly man*, or, *man of countenance* (as it is in the original) is, 1 Chron. 11. 23. (where that same story is recorded) expressed by this, that the *Egyptian* was *a man of stature*, as if it were said, a brave personage of a man; and so it takes in face, legs, body and altogether, when all these are so proportioned, as they make one a person goodly to be seen and look'd on. Now, this being applied to Christ, as subjoined to the particulars formerly mentioned, we conceive it takes in his matchless stateliness, as it results from all his properties together; so that not only this or that part of Christ is lovely, but whole Christ, when seen, is exceeding stately and lovely to the view and faith of a discerning believer, whatever others think of him: So then, the meaning is, *Ask ye what my Beloved is? (saith she) as all his parts are beautiful, severally considered, so, all being put together, he is a most stately and lovely object to behold, when he gives a full view of his countenance.* It sets out, then, a more full view of Christ, or Christ in a more full view; as if not only a man's head or legs were seen, but his whole stature, whereby he is more fully discernable. Thus Christ's countenance, in scripture, is put to signify his manifestations to his people; and here, being subjoined to the cheeks, as more extensive, it signifieth more full manifestations, whereby a view (as it were) of whole Christ is attained at once, by the believer's faith; as, *by faith*, Heb. 11. 27. *Moses* is said to have *seen him that is invisible*: And this will agree well with the scope, and the commendation following, which is in two things, 1<sup>st</sup>, It is *as Lebanon*, a most pleasant, stately hill; and therefore, that which is excellent, is often compared to it, as was said, on Chap. 4. 8, 11, 15. 2<sup>dly</sup>, It is amplified, that it is *excellent as the cedars*: They were useful, stately and tall trees, especially these that grew in *Lebanon*; the word is, *elect*, or *choice as the cedars*, which agrees well with a goodly presentation, to be tall,

straight and stately, as they were : Therefore, the Bride's stature is compared to a palm-tree, chap. 7. 7. *In a word, my Beloved (when seen) looks excellently and passing-well (saith she) so as there is no other beloved in the world, that hath such an aspect as he; who can look on him and not love him?*

*Observ.* 1. Altho' there is no fully comprehensive view of Christ to be gotten here, even by the faith of a believer (while we are upon the earth we cannot see him as he is, that being reserved for heaven) yet there are more full up-takings of him attainable, even here-away, than ordinarily believers meet with : Yea, such full views of him are to be had, which, in respect of our other ordinary attainments, may be called, a beholding of his countenance; whereas these are but a beholding of his cheeks ; for, he hath a countenance which is discernable. Neither doth the Bride speak of that she never saw, but of what she hath seen : And it imports a more full, near, thorow and distinct sight of him than is usual. 2. There is no such lovely, delightful, spiritually gallant, stately and glorious object, as our Lord Jesus, complexly considered as in himself; and there will be no sight more satisfying to a believer than this, when admitted to behold it. 3. All other beloveds, whatever they be in themselves, are yet exceedingly, nay, infinitely short of him, when he is seen: this differenceth him from them all, the more and the better other beloveds be seen, they are found to be the more feckless, insignificant and little worth ; but the more full view be gotten of Christ, he is found to be the more excellent. 4. Slight and passing views of Christ makes men think the less of him ; whereas more full, distinct and near beholding of him, doth heighten the esteem of him, and lessen the esteem of all others beside him. 5. Faith in Christ will make a real impresson of him, and of his excellency, upon the heart of a believer, even as if he had been seen by sense : Therefore, she speaks so of his countenance ; and it is a good sign, to be distinct and confident in our apprehensions of Christ's excellencies.

Verse 16. *His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.*

The tenth and last particular, commended in him, is in the beginning of the 16. verse, and it is *his mouth*, which is compared to *sweetness*, or *sweetnesses* in the plural number. By *mouth* sometimes is understood the words of the mouth, but it is not so used in this Song. The Bride's words, and his also, are set out by their lips ; and it is not like, that that, being spoken of, *verse* 13. is repeated here. Again, the *mouth*, and its *sweetness* especially, may be mentioned to signify friendliness and love, or rather the sensible manifestations of these,

these, as the husband doth by kissing his wife ; and in this sense is taken, *chap. 1. 2.* and we take that to be aimed at here, *to wit*, the sweetness of Christ's more immediate manifestations of himself unto the spiritual sense of his people, by *shedding the love of God abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost*, *Rom. 5. 5.* For, this sensible manifestation of his love is a thing that much commends him to his people, and is their satisfaction, in opposition to all the creature-satisfactions that others have, *Psal. 4. 6, 7.* therefore it agrees well with the scope. Again, it is a different commendation from any that is mentioned, 1. It differs from his *lips*, or the comfort that one hath from the word, as from the word (though it is not to be separate from that, but to carry that alongst with it) yet this is more immediate and sensible, and that is mediate, though real and sure unto faith. 2. It differs from seeing *his cheeks*, in that this is more full, near and immediate also, the being, as it were, admitted to enjoy Christ's sweet embracements. 3. It differs from *beholding his countenance*, because that may be, and only can be taken up by faith, beholding him in his excellent qualifications and offices ; but this is discernable to the believer's spiritual sense, when Christ applieth his love, as *chap. 1. 2.* In which ( to say so ) we are more passive, as being fed by him, and having it infused and shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit. If we may in a holy way follow the similitude in a spiritual sense (which is necessary for understanding of the thing) *kisses of his mouth* are his applying and venting of his love, as one doth by kissing another. This also will agree with the commendation, it is *most sweet* : it is but one word in the original, in the abstract ; and that in the plural number, *sweetnesses*, to shew the exceeding sweetness and loveliness, the soul-ravishing delight that is in that, to which no similitude or comparison can come up, clearly and perfectly to resemble it ; it is very sweetness it self. If we might allude to what philosophers say of fire in its element, or water in its element, that being there, they are more properly and eminently fire and water ; so sweetness is in its element here ; or, Christ's mouth is the very element thereof, in respect of its sensible refreshfulness to the spiritual senses of his people, to whom he manifests it. *Ask ye then what my Beloved is ?* (saith she) *he is indeed stately to look on ; but his mouth, when it is felt in his kissing of his own Bride, by manifesting his love to her sense, there, there, O there, exceeding unexpressible and unconceivable delight and satisfaction is to be found !*

*Observ.* 1. Christ hath more near and sensible ways of manifesting himself to the spiritual sense of his people, as if he had a *mouth* to kiss them. 2. There is nothing comparable to the refreshing sweetness, that these manifestations have with them : It is a *peace that passeth understanding*, *Phil. 4. 7.* and a *joy that is unspeakable and full of glory*, *1 Pet. 1. 8.* 3. This sensible feeling of the sweetness of Christ's mouth should be aimed at, and sought after by belie-

vers : Altho' the manner, measure, time, and other circumstances thereof, should be submitted to him ; yet this is not only commendable in it self, but also, as such, is proposed and commended to the daughters of *Jerusalem*, to be sought after by them. 4. The experimental feeling of this doth notably demonstrate Christ's worth to the soul that enjoys it, and makes him incomparably sweet and lovely above all things whatsoever, *Psal.* 4. 7. 5. There is no other thing can have any such sweetness or relish to a believer as Christ hath ; and to a spiritual taste, the excellency of all created beloveds will be as the white of an egg in comparison of this. Only Christ's mouth is sweetness ; and so he differs from all others : And it is a good sign, when our affections, or spiritual senses, can relish nothing but Christ.

Next, it is added, *Yea, he is altogether lovely.* Altho' she hath spent many sweet words (and indeed there hath been no straitning in her) in commending Christ, and altho' all her words be sweet, and especially, when she draws near the close, her expressions be the more massy and significant ; yet, as being necessitate to succumb under the great task of describing the excellency of her Beloved, she must give over particulars, and conclude with a general, as if she would say, Would ye know him ? O, I, even I cannot tell you all his excellent properties ; for, he is most justly called *Wonderful*, *Isa.* 9. 6. but in sum, I may say, *He is altogether lovely* : The word is, *He is all desires*, or, *all he desires*. The word, that is rendred *lovely*, comes from a root that signifieth to *cover* ; as, in *Josh.* 7. 21. it is said of *Achan*, when he saw the *wedge of gold*, that he *coveted it*, so it is such a desire as ardently covets the thing desired : And thus Christ is not simply lovely, but of such an attractive excellency, as makes him the proper Object of the most ardent and holy-coveting desires, or after which all desires should go forth, as towards the best and most desirable Object. The words are meant to express somewhat that is not expressible, or rather the unexpressibleness of that Beloved she had been commending, lest they should think she were satisfied, as if she had fully described him. We may consider the words several ways, 1<sup>st</sup>, Negatively, as they shew there is nothing in him, but what is desirable : As if she said, *All he is desires* ; there is nothing of any other nature in him, but such as I have mentioned : He is a *God of truth*, and *without iniquity*, *just and right is he*. 2. Take them positively, and so they shew whatever is in him is exceeding desirable : *Go through all his parts, qualifications, attributes and works, whereof I have given you but a hint*, saith she, *and ye will see them all exceedingly desirable*. 3<sup>dly</sup>, Take them conclusively or comprehensively ; and so, while she saith, *He is all desires*, the meaning is, There is nothing truly desirable, but it is to be found in him : the soul cannot rationally imagine that satisfaction that is not to be found in Christ, otherwise all desires were not in him ; this is sweet, even very sweet : What  
idol

idol is perfect? There are many defects in all other beloveds, but (saith she) my Beloved is perfect: All the beauties and perfections, that are scattered amongst all creatures, are in an eminent and transcendent way gathered together, contracted and to be found in him at once; so that, whatever can be desired, whether it be for this life, or that which is to come, whether for sanctification, justification, or consolation, it is eminently to be found in our Lord Jesus, *in whom all fulness dwells*, Col. 1. 19. and who alone is *all and in all* to his own, as being *full of grace and truth*, John 1. 14. 4thly, We may take them exclusively, or privatively, as they deny any thing desirable to be in any beloved, but in Christ; he is all, and so consequently they must be nothing; he is altogether lovely, and so they must be altogether lothsom: Christ is never rightly conceived of, nor commended, but where other things come down, evanish and disappear, when compared with him; *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and I desire none on earth beside thee*, saith the Psalmist, Psal. 73. 25. as having full satisfaction, and all that can be wished for, in him. It is hard to observe what may be suitable to Christ's loveliness, when the Bride gives it over: But we may say, (1.) The more that believers insist on Christ's loveliness, their hearts will warm the more with it, and it will be found to be the greater depth; for, now her expressions grow, till at last they be swallowed up. (2.) Where there is true respect to Christ, no commendation of Christ that believers can invent (whatever it be) will be satisfying to them: For, there have been, 1. Many excellent commendations given of Christ, as being like gold, myrrhe, spices, &c. Yea, 2. Like such gold, lilies and ivory, as are not in the world: And finally, She hath left and given over comparisons, and betaken her self to the abstract, *sweetness* it self; yet all comes short, and she must quit the thing as unexpressible: It is the very height of souls love-rhetorick, to close with a kind of holy amazement and admiration, which ends in silence, because they cannot say enough, when they have said all they can say. O what a lovely Object then must Christ Jesus be! They never knew him rightly, who were satisfied with their own apprehensions of him, or expressions concerning him. (3.) There is an universal loveliness in Christ, whole Christ is lovely; neither is he to be divided in our apprehension and esteem, but as every thing in him is wonderful and lovely, so is it to be admired and loved: even his lowest sufferings and seeming infirmities, his frowns and seeming greater austerity, are lovely and profitable; he is *altogether lovely*. (4.) There is a wonderful desirableness in our Lord Jesus, and incomparable satisfaction to be gotten in him: There can be nothing more to draw a soul to love it, than what is here; whatever may be attractive, is here; and there is nothing wanting to satisfy the soul that enjoys him, and hath yielded to his call, to such he is all desires. (5.) Christ is never rightly taken up,

so long as any thing desirable is supposed to be gotten elsewhere ; he must be *all desires* : And therefore, where any thing hath the least share of the affections beside him, he hath not his own place. (6.) Empty and undesirable are all beloveds in the world beside Christ, and broken cisterns will they all prove : and it is no marvel ; for all desires are in him, and therefore not one desirable thing is or can be found in them. (7.) They have a good bargain, who have Christ : It is the short cut (to say so) and compendious way to happiness, and to the inheriting of all things, to unite with Christ by faith, and to possess him ; for, all desires are in him : And miserable will the persons be who shall miss Christ, altho' they were gainers of the whole world.

Having somewhat answered the daughters of Jerusalem their question, by insisting in this excellent description of Christ, now by way of application and and holy boasting, in the close of the verse, she reasons thus : *Ye asked what my Beloved was more than other beloveds ? and, for your satisfaction, I have described him as I can many several ways, tho' all fall very far short of full expressing of his matchless worth : Now (saith she) this excellent person is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem ; bring all other beloveds, and compare them with him, and see if he be not the chiefest and standard-bearer amongst them all.* And in this confident boasting of the excellency of her Beloved, she closes : Which sweet discourse wants not its fruit on them, as we will see in the chapter following.

Consider the words four ways, *First*, In the matter : They hold forth two sweet relations betwixt Christ and the believer, and this sweetens all ; not only that this Beloved is an excellent person, but that he was hers ; she saith, *He is my Beloved*, and also *my Friend* : He is her Friend (as she is his friend, *verse 1.*) that is, one that is friendly to her, and will do for her, beyond what a brother, or mother, or the nearest of all relations, will or can do ; he is one that is born for the day of her adversity, and one whom she trusts as her own soul, he is so dear to her, and she to him ; for, this tye of friendship is mutual betwixt them. In a word (saith she) he is much in himself, and much to me, unspeakably excellent in himself, and very dear and precious to me, *my Husband*, and *my Friend* ; in sum, my friendly Husband, and my loving Friend.

*Obs.* 1. There are many sweet relations that Christ stands in to the believer, as husband, friend, brother, &c. even as there are many relations that she stands in to him, as spouse, sister, dove, &c. 2. Christ fills all the relations that he stands in to his people, and that exceedingly well : he is a singularly loving, faithful, kind and tender husband ; and a singularly kind, faithful, and unchangeable friend, the best friend that ever a believer had : for, the expression, *this is*, &c. saith, that what Christ is, he is indeed, and singularly so, as having no equal ; he is a matchless husband and friend, this

is

is the scope. 3. Christ and the believer are upon one side, they are friends, there is a league of friendship betwixt them, and they have common friends, and common adversaries. 4. These who are Christ's friends (as *verse 1. eat, O friends*) Christ may be claimed by them as their friend; and what that can infer, they may expect from him: for, he hath no bare title, neither sustains he any empty relation. 5. Believers should lean much to Christ, trust him, and expect good from him, as their friend. 6. It is a notable and singular consolation for folks to have Christ their friend; it is comfortable in life, death, and judgment, in prosperity and adversity. It implies these things, in which he is forthcoming to his friends, (1.) Constant kindness and faithfulness at all times, *he loves at all times*, Prov. 17. 17. and chap. 18. last: he never fails; nor can he at any time be charged with that which *Abalom* casts up to *Hushai*, 2 Sam. 16. 17. *Is this thy kindness to thy friend?* (2.) Sympathy, and condescending to supply their wants; *he cleaves closer than a brother*, Pro. 18. 24. It is such a love, as one hath who aimeth at his friends good, as well as his own. (3.) Familiarity in mutual communion, as useth to be betwixt friends, and freedom in conversing; as, *Exod. 3. 11. The Lord spoke with Moses as a man doth with his friend*. (4.) It takes in a mutual confidence that one may have in another, as in his very own self, and more than in any other; all which are eminently in Christ. *As ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man's friend*, and eminently of this friend, *by hearty counsel*, Prov. 27. 9. No other friends are comparable to *this friend*; happy, happy for evermore are they, whose friend Christ Jesus is. 7. Where Christ is a friend, there is he also the soul's beloved: Or, believers choosing of Christ for their Beloved, and his being kindly to them as a friend, go together; these two relations, *my beloved*, and *my friend* are never separate. Now, to be the soul's Beloved, implies these things, 1<sup>st</sup>, That, comparatively, Christ is eminently and only loved by his people, and nothing is admitted to share in their affection with him, *Phil. 3. 8. 2<sup>dly</sup>*, That there is in the soul an high esteem of him, which begets this love. 3<sup>dly</sup>, That there is such an ardent affection to him, as makes them long for union with him; as love naturally desires union with that which it loves, it desires to be *with Christ* here, and hereafter, as that which is *far the best of all*, *Philip. 1. 23. 4<sup>thly</sup>*, It suppones a delight and satisfaction, that their souls take in Christ, and expect from union with him; their happiness lies in it, and they are disquieted, and some way holily discontented and weighted, when they miss it; and under desertion and absence, easily fear, lest their heart beguile and delude them in that concerning matter, as the scope of this place, and her present exercise shews. 5. It suppones a kindliness in their love, and a well groundedness, such as a wife hath to her husband, and not such as is betwixt the adulteress and the adulterer, which is all the love  
that

that the men of the world have to their idols; but the love that the Bride hath to Christ, is a native and avowed love, of which she hath no reason to be ashamed (as men will one day be of all their idols) but to boast and glory in him; and Christ is to the believer, not what idols are to the men of the world, but what a most loving husband is to his wife, being the object of her heart-contenting and satisfying love: Wherever these properties of true love to Christ are, there may the soul lay claim to him as its friend, and be confident to find him its true and kindly friend; for, where he is the soul's Beloved, he is the soul's friend. 8. This is implied, that whatever other beloveds men set their love upon beside Christ, they will prove unsound, and unfaithful friends in the time of need: Or, confidence in any thing but Christ, will fail a man at the last; for, he is their friend, and no other beloved deserves that name; all other things will be like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint, Prov. 25. 19. or like pools in the wilderness, that run dry in the heart, and makes the way-faring men ashamed, such as Job's friends did prove to him, Job 6. 15. Miserable comforters will they be to men, in the day of their greatest need: but then especially will Christ Jesus be found to be a friend indeed; for, there is an excellency in Christ in ever relation which he stands under to his people, and an infinite disproportion betwixt him and all creatures, in respect of this.

A second way, that we may consider the words, is, as they relate to the daughters of Jerusalem their question, verse 9. Ye ask what he is more than other beloveds? Now (saith she) *this is he*, who is singular and matchless in all his properties; and so, it looks not only to her choice of him, to be her Beloved and her Friend, but saith also, that he is singularly and matchlessly such, even a non-such beloved and friend, and one who will be found, after trial, only worthy to be chosen and closed with as such. *Obs.* 1. Believers, in their answers to others, would, as particularly as may be, bring home what they say to some edifying use (for, this best clears any question proposed) and would not insist on generals, much less evanish in empty speculations, but would level at edification, and frame what they say, so, as it may best reach that end; and therefore she applies her answer to their question. 2. When Christ in his excellency and worth is a little insisted and dwelt on, he will be found to be incomparable; and the more souls search into him, the more confidently may they assert his incomparable excellency: this, she here doth, and saith, as it were, Is he not, and see ye him not now to be the chiefest among ten thousand, and more excellent than all others? as having made her assertion demonstrative, and undeniable. 3. Christ's worth can bide the trial, and there are, and may be gotten, good grounds to prove that he is well worthy of all the respect that can be put upon him; and in reason

reason his worth and excellency may be made convincing unto others, and it may be demonstrated to consciences, that Christ is of more worth than all the world; and her resuming of it thus, supposeth it now to be so clear, that they could say nothing against it, as appears more fully from the words following. 4. No other believer, nor friend that men choose beside Christ, can abide the trial; the more they are enquired into, and searched out, they will be found to be of the less worth: therefore she appeals (as it were) to all men to bring their beloveds before Christ, if they durst compare with him, as being confident none durst enter the lists, purposely and professedly to compete with him.

*Thirdly*, We may consider these words, as her application made to the daughters of *Jerusalem*, holding forth her scope, to edify them by this description of Christ, and pressingly (for their good) to bear it in upon them, that they might be made to fall in love with this Christ, that had so high a room in her heart; for, so the very strain of the words seem to run. Hence, *Obs.* 1. These who love Christ themselves, will be desirous to have others knowing and loving him also: And this may be a mark of love to Christ, an earnest desire to have him esteemed of, and loved by others. 2. These, who love Christ and others truly, will endeavour nothing more, than to have Christ made known to them, and to have them divorced from their idols, and engaged to him; thus love to them, as well as to him, manifests it self. 3. It is a piece of the duty of mutual communion, to which the Lord's people are obliged, to instruct others in the knowledge of the excellencies of Christ, that they may be brought in love with him; and where that end is proposed, according to mens several places and stations, no opportunity would be missed, nor pains spared, which may attain it. 4. That this duty of commending Christ to others, so as it may be profitable, would be exceeding warily and circumspectly gone about, as all the Brides strain clears: For, she goes about it, (1.) Tenderly, not ubraiding their ignorance. (2.) Lovingly, speaking still to them as friends. (3.) Wisely and seasonably, taking the fit opportunity of their question. (4.) Fully, solidly and judiciously, bearing forth the main things of Christ to them. (5.) Affectionately and gravely, as being affected with the thing, and in love with Christ her self. (6.) Exemplarily and convincingly, as going before them in the practice of that her self, which she endeavours to press upon them; that is, by loving and seeking Christ above all her self, she studies to commend that to others the more effectually. 5. *Obs.* That the right uptaking of Christ in his excellency, and the pressing of him upon the heart, is the most solid way of wearing all other beloveds out of request with the soul: If he once get room, the esteem of other things will quickly blow up; and there is no way to have the heart weaned from them,

but to have Christ great in the affections of his people : Therefore, when they ask, what he is more than other Beloveds ? She answers, not by crying them down, or by discovering their worthlessness, but by the describing of his worth, and thereby giving them a solid proof of his excellency to be a ground of their faith, which doth necessarily infer the other : For, *Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God ?* 1 John 5. 5.

*Fourthly*, We may consider this close, as it holds forth the holy exulting, and boasting of her soul in Christ, who is so far in excellency beyond all others : This is clear from her claiming of interest in him, and her repeating of the phrase, *this*, this singular *this*, is my Beloved ; and again, *this*, is my my Friend ; especially compared with the scope, whereby now she holds him out, not only as a matchless Beloved and Friend, but to be hers, and she thinks no shame of him ; her heart with holy gladness and joy doth exult in this excellent choice of hers above all others : As if she said, Ask ye what he is ? *This*, now so described, is he that is mine : He is not like the worthless, empty and stinking Beloveds, which others have ; I avow him, and count myself happy, and well come-to in him ; the contentment I have in him is incomparably beyond the counterfeit contentment, that all other Beloveds can give. This the manner of expression, and the frame of her heart in the uttering of it, and the scope (which is to shew her confidence in this his commendation, as most worthy to be commended) do imply. *Obs.* 1. That there is matter of boasting, and holy bragging in Christ Jesus, whether we consider the excellency that is in himself, or the confidence that his people may have in him, as one who will make all that is in him forthcoming to the utmost, for the good of his own. 2. That there is nothing beside him, that one can confidently boast of ; for, this her boasting is so appropriate to him, as it is implied, to be utterly unsuitable that men should boast of any other thing, *Let him that glorieth, glory in the Lord*, that is, in him, and in no other thing beside him. 3. That believers, who have interest in him, and have taken him to be their Beloved and their Friend, may make *their boast in him*, Ps. 34. 2. *may glory in him*, Isa. 45. 25. and *may bless themselves*, as happy eternally in him, Isa. 65. 16. This holy boasting implieth, (1.) An high estimation of him. (2.) Confidence in him without fear. (3.) Satisfaction with him, and having full contentment in him. (4.) An eminent joy resulting from these, which cannot be shaken, all the former being in an eminent degree. 4. *Obs.* That it is incumbent to the believer, who hath chosen Christ, sometimes to boast in him, and in a lovely and holy way to vaunt and boast (if we may so speak) of him above all : So are we commanded, to *glory in his holy Name*, Psal. 105. 3. and this is one of the ways we are to commend him, and Christ will take

take it as a piece of notable respect put upon him, when it is seriously done.  
 5. When a believer is in a right frame, and clear ament his interest, he will boast himself in Christ, as having *the lines fallen to him in pleasant places*, Psal. 16. 9. whatever else be his lot in the world: Christ is a bargain, that one day will be found worth the boasting of.



## C H A P. VI.

Verse 1. *Whither is thy Beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy Beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with thee?*

**T**H E sweet conference begun in *verse 8.* of the former chapter, and continued to the end thereof, betwixt the Bride and the daughters of *Jerusalem*, is further drawn out in this chapter: And, *First*, They return a new serious question, *verse 1.* In the *second* place, she replies, *ver. 2.* 3. After which, in the *third* place, the Bridegroom himself comes in, with a notable expression of his love to his Bride, and an affectionate commendation of her graces: And so, according to the number of the parties that speak, we have three parts of the chapter.

The question, proposed by the daughters of *Jerusalem*, is, *verse 1.* and it supposeth them to be convinced of Christ's worth, by the former discourse; and that they now are provoked, as being deeply in love with him, to desire and thirst after him, and communion with him. Now, as it depends upon the former discourse, and is the continuance thereof, it gives ground to observe, *1st*, That serious and faithful endeavours, to gain these that are weak, are often followed with a blessing on these upon whom such pains are taken; for, now the daughters are engaged to seek him with the Bride: And this should notably encourage to the discharge of this duty. *2dly*, As it is the duty of one to admonish and instruct another, so it is all mens duty to accept of admonition and instruction from others, and in the Lord to yield themselves thereunto, as these daughters do. *3dly*, It makes christian-fellowship sweet and pleasant, where there is faithful tenderness upon the one side, and submissive yielding on the other: *A wise reprovew upon an obedient ear, is an excellent jewel, even as an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold*, Prov. 25. 11. *4thly*, Yielding to instruction, and acknowledging of a conviction after a mistake (especially concerning Christ) is one of the first things, whereby desire

of obtaining Christ doth appear; whereas such grumblings as, *Who made thee a reprover, or instructor?* &c. evidence an unhumbl'd frame, out of case for any true desire after Christ. 5thly, This may give some directions, for Christians profitable conversing one with another; as, 1. A necessary and profitable subject would be proposed to be spoken of; for, so much the matter of the daughters question imports. 2. It would be entertained by both sides when once tabled, and all diversions barred out, and the subject proposed, closely followed with answers suitable to it. 3. The end designed, would be practice and edification (for, so it is here, *to seek him with them*) and not a mere notional contemplation. 4. The manner would be grave and serious, suitable to the matter. 5. Compellations and expressions, that are used, would be respective of each one to another. 6. These who are weak would not shun to speak, and move questions, in these things that may edify them; as we may see in the daughters carriage here. 7. They who have knowledge would not despise these who are weak, but condescend unto them. 8. It is sometimes useful to suspend explicite following of our own case, (especially when these who are present seem strangers to it) and to condescend to insist upon the case of others for their edification; thus doth the Bride with the daughters.

More particularly, in the words of *verse 1.* consider, 1. The title which the daughters give the Bride, *O thou fairest among women*: It is the same which was, *chap. 5. 9.* but here it shews their continuing in respect to her, which they vent by suitable grave expressions: It is not much at the beginning to carry respectively to the lovers of Christ; but it is much, after some familiar acquaintance, to continue so doing; which is the lesson that may be learned here. 2. Consider the question, *Whither is thy Beloved gone?* and it is repeated, to shew how serious they were in it, and how desirous of an answer. 3. There is the end, or motive, that draws this question from them, and that is, *That we may seek him with thee.*

She had told them that her Beloved was withdrawn; now, they (when convinced of his worth) ask, *Whither?* &c. which is a further step of their desire of being acquaint with Christ, and his way, than what was holden out in their question, *chap. 5. 9.* yet having infirmity also. And it shews, 1. That where there is any conviction of what Christ is, then the great design and main enquiry should be to know where he is, and how he may be attained. 2. There may be some acknowledgment of Christ's worth, and affection to him, where yet there is much ignorance of the way how to come by him. 3. It is no less necessary for a person, to know rightly where and how to seek Christ, than to know what he is. 4. There may be some honesty of desire after, and love to Christ, where faith dare not claim him as the believer's own; for, say they, where is *thy* Beloved? they say not, where is *our* Beloved? Beginners are of-

ten very anxious and afraid to make this application, altho' it may be, before their conviction and conversion, they did never question it.

Next, we would consider, that the daughters here leave the Bride's case, and enquire for instructing of themselves: whence *observe*, 1. Whosoever have any affection to Christ, and any opportunity to be instructed anent him, would thriftily improve it; if they had but the fellowship of an intelligent private Christian, it should be made good use of to that purpose. 2. Young beginners often forget all others cases but their own; and the more experienced should bear with that, and for others good pass over their own case, and be content it be laid aside and forgotten for a time. 3. They ask this, that they may be the more enabled to sympathize, and concur with her, in what she required of them: Which teacheth, that they can be most useful to others, that have some distinctness in their own condition; for, confusion in our own condition doth much obstruct the sympathy, and faithful burden-bearing that we owe to others in theirs.

The end, they propose, is, *That we may seek him with thee*: Which may be considered, first, as their end in enquiring: Tell us (as if they had said) for, we ask not for curiosity, but to be helped in practice. Whence *observe*, 1. The great end and design of all endeavours for knowlege, would not be to rest in speculation; but to be furthered in practice. 2. It saith, no sooner should folk be clear in a duty, but instantly should they set about the practice of it. 3. Mens practice should be according to their knowlege; their seeking, and knowing where to seek, should go together. 4. The finding of Christ is the great end of all religious duties, wherein we are to seek him, as these duties are the end of knowlege. 5. Often good desires after Christ are much impeded by ignorance and confusion, even in the judgments of these that affectionately love him.

Again, we may consider the words as a motive proposed to the Bride, to make her to answer; which is, Shew us, we pray thee, where we may find him; for, we are in earnest, and would gladly seek him with thee. And, from the words so considered, *observe*, 1. Nothing will nor should more prevail with a tender believer, to move him to be helpful to others, than this, that they are serious and yet weak: Yea, 2. Singleness of desire to profit by the means, is a piece of that frame that is necessary, in order to our edification by them; for, thus they strengthen themselves in the expectation of an edifying answer, which otherwise they could not have expected; they who are serious and single, though seckless, may look for God's guiding of them.

3. These words may be considered, as holding forth the daughters purpose, and (as it were) an obligation that they come under: Tell us (say they) *and we will seek him with thee*: And this teacheth, that humble, single purposes, are

are neither unfuitable, nor unprofitable to beginners; yea, it is very necessary, that they seriously devote, and engage themselves in that blessed work of seeking after Jesus Christ.

Further, the words, *we will seek him with thee*, considered in themselves, import not only a seeking, but a joint seeking with her, as coming in to share in the same exercise that she was taken up with. Which shews, *1<sup>st</sup>*, That they acquiesced in the same way of religion, which they that were in Christ before them did follow. *2<sup>dly</sup>*, That there is an union to be kept amongst the worshippers of Christ, and a joint cordial concurrence in going about of duties. *3<sup>dly</sup>*, That this united, or joint-way is profitable to all, both to beginners, and to these that are more experienced; otherwise it would not be such a motive, as it is here held forth to be. *4<sup>thly</sup>*, Altho' believers, and all professors, have an union and communion amongst themselves (as the Bride hath formerly kept with the daughters of *Jerusalem*) yet when sincerity is begun to be more fresh and lively, or when it is begotten where it was not before, there follows a more near union and communion than that which was before: Now they mind another joint way of seeking him, than formerly they had done. *5<sup>thly</sup>*, Often the persons, by whom souls have gotten good, are very dear to them, and in much respect with them, so that their way hath a testimony from them, as approveable; for (saith the daughters) *we will seek him with thee*, who instructed us. It is true, that this may sometimes degenerate (so that folks may drink in the dregs from such persons, with their wine) yet it seems, in the main principles of practical godliness, not to be unsafe; as, *Heb. 13. 7, 8.* *6<sup>thly</sup>*, The great, main and native use of what is spoken of Christ's excellency, is to have souls brought in love with him, and engaged to seek him; and if this be not gained, any other effect of what is spoken, is little worth, as to what mainly concerns themselves. As this was the scope of all the Bride spoke concerning Christ, so it is attained on these daughters to whom she spoke; and it is the great thing we should aim at, when either we speak of Christ's worth, or hear it spoken of.

## B R I D E.

Verse 2. *My Beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.*

The Bride is not long in returning her answer, but, being glad to have the opportunity to further their edification, instantly she replies, *verse 2. My Beloved is gone down*, &c. as being well acquaint with the place, where he useth and haunts: *If ye would find him* (saith she) *his withdrawings are not far off, but as a man retires sometimes to his garden, and is not in his chamber, so Christ, when*  
*withdrawn*

*withdrawn from sense (which is the chamber, chap. 1. 4.) he is to be found in the assemblies of his people, in his Church and ordinances, which are (as it were) his garden; there ye would seek him.* This is the sum of *verse 2.* and then, *verse 3.* having instructed them by this notable digression, she returns to quiet her self (when all outward means fail) in the faith of her interest in him.

If it were asked, How the daughters could ask the Bride, where Christ was; or how she now can tell them, when she her self is seeking, and knoweth not (as she seemed to profess, *chap. 5. 6, 7, 8.*) where to find him? *Ans.* 1. Believers will often give more distinct advice to others, in their difficulties, than they can take to themselves in their own exercises; because light and reason guides them unbyassedly, in reference to others; and sense, inclination and affection sway too much in their own cases. 2. Believers may complain they know not how to find him, not so much from defect of light as of life, when either in their own practice, or in their success in duties, they are not answerable to what they aim at: exercised souls are ready to aggregate their own infirmities; and what is indeed in them, is to their own account, as not in them, till the Lord shine upon it and quicken it, and so bring it out, and make it appear.

In the first part of her answer, *verse 2.* she speaks to these two, *First*, Where Christ is. *Secondly*, What he is doing. The first giveth them direction where to seek him; the second encourages them to fall about it, as a thing acceptable to him: The place, where he is, is set forth by two expressions, 1<sup>st</sup>, *He is gone down to his garden*, which implieth the similitude formerly expressed, of a man's retiring from his chamber or closet to his garden: This garden signifies the Church, as *chap. 4. 12, 15.* and here, as opposed to gardens, in the words following, it holdeth forth the catholick visible Church, as gardens signifie particular societies, or congregations: The Church is like a garden that is within one precinct, yet divided into divers quarters and inclosures: This, being the Church that hath the promise of Christ's presence, and where he is ever to be found, must be understood of no particular Church, of which that cannot be asserted, that Christ shall be always there: It must therefore be the catholick Church, distinguished from particular Churches, or gardens. 2<sup>dly</sup>, *He is gone to the beds of spices*: As gardens have distinct plots of flowers, and beds of spices, and some particular parts are allotted for these, where especially they grow; so, in the Church, Christ hath his plants, whereof some are sanctified with grace (therefore compared to *spices*) and these in some parts of the visible Church are more abounding than in other parts (as spices in *beds* together, that may be elsewhere but in particular stalks, and not so frequent) and as men love and frequent that plot of their garden most; so doth Christ most manifest himself in his ordinances ordinarily, where he

*hath*

hath his spices and lilies in greatest abundance : And thus this last part qualifies the former ; he is in his Church, but especially where his spices are most abounding : And therefore, would you have him ? seek him in his Church and amongst his people, and especially in such societies of his people, where true and lively believers are most to be found. Here observe (beside what was observed on *chap. 4. 12.*) Christ's Church, tho' it have many subdivisions, yet is it one Church, one whole catholick Church, whereof particular Churches are parts, *1 Cor. 12. 28.* 2. It is in that Church, and no where else, that Christ's presence is to be found, and where believers, the spices and lilies, are planted. 3. There may be in that one visible Church many moe real converts in one part thereof than in another ; *spices in beds* are not in every place of the garden. 4. Tho' Christ hath a singular care of, and respect for his whole Church, and hath a peculiar presence there, wherever there is any part thereof ; yet, where he hath much people, beyond what he hath in other places (as in *Antioch*, *Acts 11. 21.* in *Corinth*, *Acts 18. 10.* and *Ephesus*, *Acts 19. 20.*) there especially is he present, and there ordinarily continues he the power and life of his ordinances. 5. These, who desire Christ, would not run out of the Church to seek him, or respect any way of finding him, which others have not found out before them ; but would seek after him, by the ordinary means, in his Church : for, this answers their question, *Where is he ?* proposed for that end, that they might seek and find him.

He hath a twofold exercise in his gardens, for he is not idle : He is gone there, *First, To feed in the gardens.* By *gardens*, in the plural number, are understood the subdivisions and particular plots of that one garden, formerly mentioned : The *Jews* had their synagogues, where the people did meet, and the Law was read (as we have our distinct congregations) as, *Psal. 74. 8.* and *Acts 15. 21.* do evidence. To *feed*, taken actively (as *chap. 1. 7. where thou feeds, &c.*) signifieth his taking care to provide for his own in the Church : if taken passively, he is gone down to *feed*, that is, that himself may eat ; and it is the same with what was, *chap. 5. 1. I have come to my garden, I have eaten, &c.* And the scope in both looks to the same, and so the meaning of the similitude is, that as men have their gardens, wherein they solace themselves, and feed upon the pleasant fruits that are in them, so doth Christ delight himself in his Church, and take pleasure therein ; as, *Psal. 147. 11. He taketh pleasure in them that fear him ; and he delighteth in the habitable parts of the earth*, *Prov. 8. 31.* that is, where saints dwell, and where the place of his rest and haunt is ; other places being but as an uninhabited wilderness to Christ, the Church is the garden, wherein he delights and finds fruit. He is said to feed in *the gardens*, and not in the *garden*, 1. To shew, that the way of his manifesting himself to his Church, is by erecting his ordinances in par-

in particular societies, and thus he derives his blessings. 2. To shew, that tho' there be divers societies, or particular Churches, yet his presence is not excluded from, or tyed to any one of them: *He walks amongst the candlesticks*, as observing every one of them, and manifesting himself among them, as he seeth good.

The second part of his exercise is, *to gather lilies*: By *lilies* in this garden (as often hath been said) are understood believers, chap. 2. 2, 16. To *gather*, is a borrowed expression from men that use to gather some flowers they delight in, to bring to their chambers with them; or some fruits, that they may dress and prepare them, as we heard, chap. 5. 1. Christ's gathering of his lilies, points, 1<sup>st</sup>, At his calling of them effectually who belong to him; the elect may be called lilies to be gathered, as they are called *sons of God* to be gathered, John 11. 51, 52. Thus also, Matth. 23. 37. is Christ's expression, *I would have gathered you*, &c. whereby their bringing-in to him is signified. 2<sup>dly</sup>, It points at his glorifying of them, which is in part, when particular believers are gathered to their fathers, as the phrase is, Gen. 25. 8. and 35. 29. This is, as his pulling of some lilies for his own satisfaction: and this gathering will be perfected, when all the Elect shall be gathered from the four winds, Matth. 24. 31. and the angels shall gather the good fish into vessels, but cast the bad away, Matth. 13. 48. In a word, then, the sense and scope of the whole is this, *Would ye (saith she) have my Beloved, or know where he is that ye may seek him? He is in his Church, seek him in the way of his ordinances; for, he is there, purposely to delight himself in doing good to his people: it is his errand to welcome and gather them as a hen doth her chickens under her wings; therefore (saith she) seek him there, for ye can find no better opportunity.* Observe, 1. Our Lord Jesus takes pleasure to be amongst his people, and to do them good; he feeds on this with delight, as a hungry man doth on his meat. 2. The more Christ gains (to say so) he feeds the better, and is the more cheerful; he *feeds* and *gathers* at once: And this gathering of souls is as sweetly refreshing and delightfom to our blessed Lord Jesus, as the plucking of the sweetest flowers is to a man walking in a garden; and there is nothing more acceptable and welcome to him, than a seeking-finner. 3. Wherever Christ's ordinances are, there may his presence be expected, in one particular Church, as well as in another; for, he feeds in the gardens. 4. The great scope of ordinances is to gather-in believers, and build them up; and there is nothing more acceptable to Christ, than to have some to gather, some whom he may save: that's a refreshing feast to him, John 4. 34. 5. Our Lord Jesus hath delight in all his people, and in every one of them, where sincerity is, tho' it be not in the greatest measure: Therefore it is said, he gathers *lilies* indefinitely, that is, one of them as well as another. 6. So long as our Lord Jesus

hath a Church and ordinances in it, as long doth he continue to gather; and he is not idle, but is still gathering, tho' at sometimes, and in some places, this may be more sensible and abundant than ordinary. 7. It is a great encouragement to poor sinners to seek for Christ, to know, that this is his very errand in his ordinances, to gather them, and that he is waiting on, like the prodigal's father, ready to run with delight to welcome them: this is proposed as a motive to the daughters, to seek him. 8. Altho' believers may seem for a time to be neglected, and, as it were, forgotten, yet will the Lord gather them all in at last, as his choice of all the world, they being the flowers of his garden: There is a good day coming to believers, when not one of them shall be left to grow in this fighting Church, but he shall take them in to the King's palace, there to be for ever with him. 9. The readiness of Christ to welcome sinners, and the delight that he hath in doing them good, should exceedingly provoke and hearten sinners to seek him, while he may be found. This is the great scope of this verse.

*Verse 3. I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine: He feedeth among the lilies.*

The second part of her answer to the daughters question, is, *verse 3.* and it contains the great ground whereon she quiets her self, and wherein she rests, as being that which makes Christ lovely to her, even tho' absent; *I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine:* This now is the anchor which she casts, when all other means seemed to disappoint her. We had the same words for substance, and to the same scope, *chap. 2. 16.* wherein she first asserted her interest, and secondly maintained it against an objection, even as she doth here. Beside what was said there, we may consider the words here, *First,* As in them her interest is repeated, tho' it was once formerly asserted: Which shews, 1. That believers, tho' once clear anent their interest, may have their difficulties and doubts recurring upon them. 2. That, when new difficulties recur, there is no new way to be taken for discussing of them, but the same way of believing, which is again to be renewed and kept in exercise. 3. It shews, that miscarriages do not break off that union which is betwixt Christ and his people: For, altho' there had been many failings in her former carriage, yet her interest is still the same. 4. Believers, even over, and notwithstanding of, many challenges, may lay claim to an interest in Christ, when they are in the exercise of repentance, faith and other graces. 5. Her thus repeating, and again owning of her interest, shews, that she was exceedingly clear and perswaded thereof. Whence observe, Believers may attain a great degree of assurance, and may and should not only aim to have it, but

to preserve and keep it clear: for, that is of great concernment as to their peace; and the weight of their consolation, in their confident application of all the promises, depends on it.

*Secondly*, Consider, altho' the words be the same, yet the order is changed; it was, chap. 2. 16. *My Beloved is mine*, &c. so there she begins at asserting her interest in him, but here she begins at asserting his interest in her, or her betaking of her self to him, for clearing of her interest in him; *I am* (saith she) *my Beloved's*, or, *I am to my Beloved*: and from her betaking her self to him, and adhering to the bargain, she concludes he also is hers. Which shews, 1. That they who are clear of their adhering to Christ, and of their fleeing to him, as their choice, may warrantably conclude that Christ is theirs, even tho' sense would say the contrary. 2. When there is nothing in Christ's dispensation to us, that looks convincing-like of his love to us, it is good to reflect on our acting on him; and if it be found that we have fled to him, and closed with him, then there is ground to conclude our union with him, and interest in him; and there cannot be a sounder way of reasoning than that: For, if we on our part be answerable to the call, we are not to question his part, (namely, his bestowing of himself on us, according to the tenor of his offers) but to believe it according to his word. Believers may sometimes be put to this way of arguing, and it is sure.

*Thirdly*, If we consider the words, as following on her former desertion and exercise, and as being now intended by the Bride (as her scope) to fix her self, they give ground to observe, 1. That faith is still a refuge: when all God's dispensations, and every thing in the believer's case, seems to leave the heart in disquietness, faith is then the last and great refuge. 2. Faith is then most satisfying, when repentance is exercised, and all other means diligently gone about; therefore may she now cast this anchor, after she hath been in the exercise of repentance, and in the use of other means (as we have seen in the former chapter) which had been presumption to have been done at first, these being slighted: Faith will sustain souls in duty, but presumption puffs up (as in verse 3.) even when they are out of it; faith preserves from fainting under discouragements in the way of God, presumption strengthens against just challenges, when folks are out of his way.

The second part of the verse, *He feeds among the lilies*, was also spoken to, chap. 2. 16. It is brought-in here, to remove that objection, *If he be thine, where is he? Is he not away? And if he be away, why claims thou interest in him?* She answers them, *Tho' he be not present to sense, yet is he ever kind to his people, and therefore cannot but be kind to me; which makes me conclude, That tho' he be not present to sense, yet he is mine, and I am his.* Believers are called *lilies* often, 1. For their native beauty, *Matth. 6. 29.* 2. For their favoriness,

chap. 5. 13. 3. For their *growing*, and making increase, as the *lilie*; *Hof. 14. 5.* And so the similitude points at these three excellencies of the believer, (1.) The native beauty and loveliness of Christ's grace in them (2.) The sweet relish and favoriness of their graces. And, (3.) Their spiritual growth in grace, from one degree of it to another. Christ's *feeding among his lilies*, shews, the great delight he takes in them, and the pleasure he hath to do them good, as was cleared, chap. 2. 16. *Observe*, 1. Christ is exceeding loving to, and tender of, all his people, of one as well as of another; and hath been so from the beginning, that none had ever any reason to complain. 2. Christ's way, in general, to his people, when well taken up, may notably quiet, content and comfort any of them, when a difficulty comes on, or when under any darkness or desertion, as the Spouse here was; He never did any of his own wrong. 3. A believer, that hath clearness anent his fleeing to Christ by faith, may draw comfortable conclusions from, and comfortably apply, the way of Christ with others of his people to themselves, and expect that same kindness from him, that they have met with; for, the covenant is one and the same with them all. 4. Believers may sometimes be put to gather their comfort, and to sustain their faith, more from the experience of others, in what they have found, and how Christ hath carried to them, than from any thing that is in their own present condition. 5. She propounded Christ's kindness to his people (*the lilies*) to encourage the daughters of *Jerusalem* to seek him, *verse 2.* now, here, she makes use of the same ground, for quieting of her self. Hence learn two things, *1st*, That same, which warrants believers at first to approach to Christ, may encourage them to renew and continue the exercise of their faith, in making application of him and his comforts. *2dly*, It is good, in our own practice, to make use of the same grounds, and to walk by the same rules, that we would propose to others.

### BRIDEGROOM.

*Verse 4. Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.*

In *verse 4.* (which begins the third part of the chapter) Christ, the Bridegroom, comes in and speaks: Our Lord Jesus (as it were) hath been long silent, and here he breaks in, without any preface, and makes up all his former absence and silence, by his singular kindness, when he manifests himself to his Bride; which kindness appears in the warmth and sweetness of his many and various expressions. He continues speaking unto *verse 10.* of chap. 7. after he had knocked at her door, chap. 5. 2. he had been longing, as it were,

to

to be in ; and now, when he wins in, he insists the more, and several ways prosecutes and amplifies the commendation of his Bride : This is, 1<sup>st</sup>, Generally propounded, in three similitudes, *verse 4.* 2<sup>dly</sup>, It is aggregated in one instance thereof, *verse 5.* --- 3<sup>dly</sup>, He descends to particulars, *ver. ---5, 6, 7.* 4<sup>thly</sup>, He takes her up in diverse considerations, that speak her to be lovely and beautiful, *ver. 8, 9.* 5<sup>thly</sup>, This is confirmed by two instances and proofs, 1. What the daughters did esteem of her, and their praise is marked, *ver. 9, 10.* 2. It is instanced in the influence that her loveliness had on him, *ver. 11, 12, 13.* And 6<sup>thly</sup>, He proceeds in a different method from what he had, *chap. 4.* to set out the particulars of her loveliness, *chap. 7.*

Generally she is set out, *verse 4.* by three comparisons, 1. *She is beautiful as Tirzah* : This was a city of the tribe of *Manasseh*. The word in the original comes from a root, that signifieth *acceptable* ; whereby it seems, that this city hath been exceeding pleasant. It was the seat of one of the kings of *Canaan*, *Josh. 12. 24.* and of the kings of *Israel*, after the rent of the ten tribes from the house of *David*, until *Zimri* burnt it ; after which *Omri* built *Samaria*, as is to be seen at large, *1 Kings 16.* Thus the spiritual beauty of holiness in believers (*Psal. 110. 3.*) is set out as having in it so much loveliness as may commend it, and make it desirable and acceptable to others. 2. *She is comely as Jerusalem* : This was the head city of *Judah*, *beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth*, *Psal. 48. 2.* but most beautiful for the ordinances and worship of God, which were there ; therefore glorious things are spoken of it, more than any thing that was to be seen by carnal eyes, and it was loved, on that account, *more than all the dwellings of Jacob*, *Psal. 87. 2, 3.* It is ordinarily taken for a type of the Church, which is set out by it ; as, *Psal. 122.* It seems here the Lord doth respect the believer's spiritual beauty, with reference to that comeliness and orderliness, which is to be seen among them, and is maintained by them in the exercise of his ordinances ; and also in respect of his estimation, every believer is a *Jerusalem* to him, where he dwells, where he is worshipped, and to whom he hath given the promise of his presence. Believers are to him as *Tirzah* and *Jerusalem*, the most beautiful cities of that land, for the time. Or, the first similitude, taken from *Tirzah*, may look to outward beauty ; for, *Tirzah* was a beautiful city : and the other similitude, taken from *Jerusalem*, may look to Church-beauty, as the ordinances were there : And so the sense runs, *My love, thou art to me as the most excellent thing in the world ; yea, as the most excellent thing in the visible Church, which is more precious to him than any thing in the world.* 3. *She is terrible as an army with banners* : An army is strong and fearful ; a banner'd army is stately and orderly, under command, and in readiness for service ; an army with banners, is an army in its most stately posture : The Church is

ter-

terrible as such an army, either, 1<sup>st</sup>, Considered complexly or collectively, her ordinances have power, authority and efficacy, like a banner'd army : So the Church's spiritual weapons are said to be *mighty and powerful through God*, 2 Cor. 10. 5, 6. This, being compared with the 9. and 10. verses, may have its own place. But, 2<sup>dly</sup>, The scope here, and the words following, look especially at the stateliness, majesty, and spiritual valour that is in particular believers, who are more truly generous, valorous and powerful, than any army with banners ; when their faith is exercised, and kept lively, they prevail where-soever they turn, they carry the *victory over the world*, 1 John 5. 4. over devils, which are enemies whom no worldly army can reach ; but by the power of faith they prevail, even to quench the *violence of fire*, as it is in Heb. 11. 34. and by faith they *waxed valiant in fight* : But mainly this holds in respect of Christ himself, they prevail over him, in a manner, by their princely carriage, as Jacob did, Gen. 32. 28. *As a prince hast thou had power with God and men, and hast prevailed* : See Hos. 12. 4. *He had power over the angel, and prevailed* : And indeed, no army hath such influence upon him, as believers have, which is such, that he cannot (as it were) stand before them, or refuse them any thing, that they with weeping and supplications wrestle with him for, according to his will. Now, that it is in this respect, mainly, that the believer is called terrible as an army with banners, is clear, (1.) From the scope, which is to comfort a particular believer, who hath been wrestling with him already under desertions. (2.) The next words confirm it, *Turn away thine eyes from me* (saith he) *for they have overcome me* : What stateliness, or terribleness (might one say) is in a poor believer ? It is easily answered, that this is not any awful or dreadful terribleness that is here intended, but the efficacy of faith, and the powerful victory which through the same, by Christ's own condescending, the believer hath over him ; and so in his account, as to prevailing with him, Christ's Bride is more mighty than many armies, in their most stately posture ; therefore (saith he) *thine eyes* (that is her faith) *have overcome me* (that is her terribleness) *turn them away*, I cannot (to say so) abide them. And these three together make the believer (or rather Christ's love, who useth these expressions) wonderful, First, The believer is beyond all the world for beauty. Secondly, The visible Church, and believers in her, in respect of ordinances and her ecclesiastick estate, is very comely and lovely ; and yet the believers inward beauty is beyond that also, *the King's daughter is all glorious within*. Thirdly, Believers, in regard of the power of their faith, are more terrible than armies, or all military power among men : Thou art (saith he) so to me, and hast such influence on me, and may expect thus to prevail with, and in a manner to overcome me : And so Christ is so far from quarrelling with her, for her bygone carriage now, that he effectually comforts and commends her.

Hence

Hence *Obs.* 1. Our Lord Jesus is a most friendly welcomer of a sinner, and the sweetest passer-by of transgressions that can be; there is no upbraiding here for any thing, but every word speaks how well he takes with her. 2. Our Lord Jesus his manifestations are seasonable and wise: Seasonable, that now he comes, when the Bride hath left no mean unessayed, and was at a stand; wise, that he comes not until she had found the bitterness of her own way, and was brought to a more lively exercise of faith, repentance, holiness and profitable experiences therein; of which we have spoken in what goeth before. 3. The Lord is not displeased with humble believing, and with the claiming of interest in him by his own, even when his dispensations to sense are dark, but takes very well with it, and hath a special complacency in it, and therefore comes in with this intimation of his love here, importing his hearty accepting of her. 4. The Lord's commendations of his people, and the intimations of his love to them, are such, as it may be seen he conforms and proportions them to their condition and exercise; and when they have been under any long and sharp exercise, (as the Bride was in the former chapter) he makes, when he comes, his manifestations the more sweet and full, as here. 5. Believers, when grace is exercised, must needs be beautiful creatures, and much esteemed of by Christ, who thus commends them. 6. Grace and holiness in a believer's walk is much more beautiful and acceptable to Christ, than the external ordinances (though excellent in themselves) as separable from it; for, *Jerusalem*, that was very beautiful as to ordinances, is but an emblem of this. 7. There is an awfulness and terribleness in believers, as well as loveliness, which makes them terrible to the profane; even whether they will or not, a godly carriage puts a restraint on them. 8. Loveliness, terribleness and authority in holiness, are knit together: When a particular believer, or Church, is lively in holiness, then have they weight and authority; and when that fails, they become despicable. 9. The believer hath great weight with Christ; he is the only army that prevails over him, as faith is the only weapon, being humbly exercised, by which they overcome: This is more fully expressed in the next verse.

Verse 5. *Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me : -----*

The first part of the fifth verse contains the amplification and heightning of the Bride's lovely terribleness; and the great instance and proof thereof is held forth in a most wonderful expression, *Turn away thine eyes from me*; and as wonderful a reason, *for they have overcome me*, saith the Beloved: Wherein consider, First, That wherein this might and irresistible terribleness of hers

consisted, it is her *eyes*, which are supposed to be looking on him, even when she knew not, to her sense, where he was : By *eyes*, we shew, *chap. 4. 9.* were understood her love to him, and faith in him, whereby she was still cleaving to him under desertion, and in the present dark condition she was in, seeking to find him out. *Secondly*, This phrase, *Turn away thine eyes*, is not so to be taken, as if Christ approved not her looking to him, or her faith in him ; but, to shew the exceeding great delight he had in her placing her faith and love on him, which was such, that her loving and believing looks ravished him (as it is *chap. 4. 9.*) and (as it were) his heart could not stand out against these looks, more than one man could stand out against a whole army, as the following expression clears : It is like these expressions, *Gen. 32. 28. I pray thee let me go*, and, *Exod. 32. 10. Let me alone, Moses* ; which shews, that it is the believer's strength of faith, and importunity of love, exercised in humble dependence on him, and cleaving to him, which is here commended ; for (saith he) *they have overcome me*. This shews, that it is no violent, or unwilling victory over him : But (in respect of the effect that followed her looks) it holds forth the intenseness of his love, and the certainty of faith's prevailing, that (to speak so with reverence and admiration) he is captivate, ravished and held with it, as one that is overcome, because he will be so ; yea, according to the principles of his love, and the faithfulness of his promises, whereby he walks, he cannot but yield unto the believing importunity of his people, as one overcome. In sum, it is borrowed from the most passionate love that useth to be in men, when they are so taken with some lovely object, that a look thereof pierceth them : This, though in every thing (especially as implying defects) it cannot be applied to Christ, yet in a holy spiritual manner, the effects, for the believer's comfort, are as really and certainly, but much more wonderfully, in Christ. These expressions are much of the same nature with these spoken of, upon *chap. 3. 4.* and *chap. 4. 9.* and therefore the doctrines there, will follow here. But further, from the scope and repetition, *Observe*, *1st*, That the believers eyes may look, that is, their love and faith may be exercised on Christ, even in their dark and deserted conditions ; and it is their property to look alway to him, even when their eyes are, as it were, blind through desertion, he is still the object they are set upon. *2dly*, That when these graces of faith and love are exercised on Christ, they are never fruitless, but always prevail and obtain, though it be not always sensible to the believer. *3dly*, The love and faith of believers have weight with Christ, and affect him, even when he keeps up himself, he may be overcome even then ; for, the expression in the text looks to what was past. *4thly*, Faith, working by love, is a most gallant, and holy daring thing, bold in its enterprises to pursue after, to grip, and stick to Christ over all difficulties (as may be seen

in

in her former carriage) and most successful as to the event. 5<sup>thly</sup>, The more stayedly and stoutly, with love, humility and diligence, that faith is set on Christ, it is the more acceptable to him, and hath the greater commendation, as the eleventh of the *Hebrews*, and his commendation of that woman's faith, *Matth.* 15. 25. do confirm. Tenaciousness, and importunity in holding of, hanging on, and cleaving to Christ by faith, may well be marvelled at, and commended by Christ, but will never be reprov'd nor rejected: They greatly mistake Christ, who think that wrestling by faith will displease him; for, even though he seem to keep up himself, it is but to occasion, and to provoke to more of the exercise of these graces, in which he takes so much delight.

Verse 5. ----- Thy hair is as a flock of goats; that appear from Gilead.

Verse 6. Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them.

Verse 7. As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.

The following particulars of her commendation, in the end of the 5. and in the 6. and 7. verses, are set down in the same words, *chap.* 4. 1, 2, 3. and therefore we need say no more for their explication, only we would consider the reason of repeating them in the same words, which is the scope here, and it is this, Altho' he commended her formerly in these expressions, yet considering her foul slip, *chap.* 5. 2, 3. and his withdrawing on the back of it, she might think that he had other thoughts of her now, and that these privileges and promises, which she had ground to lay claim to before, did not belong to her now; and therefore she could not comfortably plead an interest in them now, as before: To remove this mistake or doubt, he will not only commend her, but in the same very words, to shew that she was the same to him, and that his respect was not diminished to her; therefore he will not alter her name, nor her commendation, but will again repeat it for her confirmation, intimating his love thereby; and also for her instruction, teaching the Bride her duty by these particulars of her commendation, and shewing her what she should be. And this commendation had not met so well with her case, nor expressed so well his unchangeable love, if it had been given in other terms. From this we may observe, 1. As believers are ready to slip and fail in their duty, so are they ready to suspect Christ to be changing towards them, because of their failings; they are very apt, from their own sickleness and changes, to apprehend

hend him to be changeable also, and to refuse comfort from all bygone evidences and intimations of his love, and from all words that have comforted them, till they be restored and set right again. 2. Our Bridegroom is most constant in his affection to his Bride, continuing still the same; and as he is the most free forgiver of wrongs to his own, so he is the most full forgetter of them, when they return; and therefore he continues speaking to her in the same terms as formerly, without any alteration, as if no such wrong on her side had been committed. 3. Renewing of repentance and faith by believers, after failings, puts them in that same condition and capacity with Christ, for laying claim to his love, and their wonted privileges and comforts, wherein they were before, even as if such failings and miscarriages had never been. 4. Our Lord Jesus would have his people confirmed, and strengthened in the faith of the constancy of his love, the unchangeableness of their interest, and the privileges following thereon: And seeing he thus loves his people, he allows them to believe it. 5. It is not easy to fix and imprint Christ's words on believers hearts, and to get them affected with them: Therefore, often both promises and duties must be repeated; and what was once spoken, must be again repeated for their good, especially after a slip and fit of security, the same word hath need to be made lively again, and fresh to their relish, which the Lord doth here. 6. Unless Christ speak, and make the word lively, the sweetest word, even that which once possibly hath been made lively to a believer, will not favour, but will want its relish and lustre, if he repeat it not.

*Verse 8. There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number.*

*Verse 9. My dove, my undefiled is but one: she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her: the daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.*

This kind Bridegroom proceeds in the commendation of his Bride, *ver. 8, 9.* and shews the rich excellency that is in her, by considering her several ways, whereby she is preferable to what is most excellent: And then, in the following verses, he confirms this by a twofold proof. And lastly, *verse 13.* closeth the chapter with a kind invitation, whereby, as it were, by a new proof of his love, he puts the commendation, given her, out of doubt.

For understanding the 8. and 9. verses, we are to conceive, that by *daughters, virgins, queens, concubines*, by this *dove* that is *one*, and the *mother* that *bears*, are not understood any party distinct from the Church or Bride, but the same

same Bride diversly considered, taking in, *First*, the Church as visible, which is beautiful in her ordinances, external profession and order; for, she is the mother that bears the daughters (who are the daughters of Jerusalem) and that is said to be seen; both which expressions hold forth this, and accordingly mother and daughters have hitherto been understood in this Song, chap. 3. 4, 5. *Secondly*, and especially, the Church as invisible, and the real believers who are members of the Church invisible; for, the scope here is to commend her graces: and if we consider the commendation preceeding, and the proofs given, it will appear that they especially belong to her, and by analogy agree to the visible Church, wherein she is comprehended.

This diverse consideration of the Church, as one and moe, is not, *1st*, Disagreeable to other scriptures, in which Christ useth to commend her; as we see, *Psal.* 45. 9, 13, 14. where there is the Queen, called the King's daughter, and the Virgins, or Daughters her companions, who are with her: Yet by all is understood the same invisible Church, considered collectively as one body, or distributively in her several members. Nor, *2dly*, is it unsuitable to the strain of this Song; nor is it absurd, as was shown in the Preface, and needs not now be repeated. And, *3dly*, It agrees well with Christ's scope here (where he is, to say so, seeking how to express fully the commendation of his Bride, as singular and eminent) thus to consider her; for, the moe ways she be considered, her excellency appears the more, she being excellent, whatever way she be lookt on: And if as visible she be glorious, and some way one in him, much more as invisible she is so; which is the scope, as is clear, *verse* 9. By Queens, Concubines and Virgins, then, we understand believers of different growths and degrees: I say, Believers, 1. Because these titles agree best to them, according to the strain of this Song and of *Psal.* 45. 2. They are supposed to be of one mother. 3. They praise the Bride, which is an evidence of honesty and sincerity, and a greater argument of her excellency, that she is praised and commended by such as had discerning: I say, we are here to understand believers of different growths and degrees; so that some believers are Queens, that is, more glorious, and admitted to the highest privileges; some are as Concubines, who were accounted lawful wives as to conjugal fellowship, but differed in this, that they had not such government over the family, and their children had not right to inherit, therefore they are as half wives, as the word in the original will bear; some are Virgins, that are not so far admitted, yet are of a chaste carriage, and so differenced from others, as was said on chap. 1. 3. Next, The commendation is, that tho' there be many Queens, moe Concubines, and Virgins without number (that is, tho' there be many believers of different sizes and degrees) yet there is but one Bride, which is a singular excellency in her, and an unheard-of thing, that so many

make up but one Bride; the like whereof is not to be found in any marriage that ever was in the world: Or, we may conceive thus, Tho' men, for their satisfaction, sought out many queens, concubines and virgins, because there was not to be found in any one what was satisfying, yet (saith he) my one Bride is to me many virtually, as if the worth of so many queens, concubines and virgins were combined in one: And thus, as he set him out chief of all Husbands, so doth he set her out as chief of all Brides, and as comprehending in her alone all that was desirable, as the next part of the 9. *verse* clears. By the number, *threescore, fourscore, and without number*, we conceive an indefinite number is to be understood; that is, they are many, only they of the inferior ranks are manyest, that is, there are more concubines than queens, far advanced in Christianity, and again, more virgins than concubines, because experienced believers of an high degree are most rare, and these who are not grown up, to have their senses exercised, are most numerous: In a word, there are more weak than strong believers. Which saith, 1. That there are degrees amongst true believers; all have not the same degree of grace, tho' all have the same grace for kind, and tho' all be in the same covenant: there are old men or *fathers*, *young men*, and *little children* or *babes*, 1 John 2. 12, 13. 2. Among believers, there are many more weak than strong. 3. He accounts of them all as honourable, and reckons even the virgins as commendable, tho' they come not up to be queens. Yet, 4. Where grace is most lively, and saith most strong, there he dignifies believers with a most special and ample commendation, *verse* 9.

The 9. *verse* makes up the scope with the former. By *dove* and *undefiled*, we said, is understood the Church, especially the invisible Church of believers, who all partake of the same nature and property, and so of the same privileges; the titles are spoken of before. The commendation is threefold,

*First*, She is *one*, which sets her out, not only with unity in her affections, but (to say so) with a kind of oneness in her self: Thus the visible catholick Church is one garden, *verse* 2. comprehending many beds of spices; one Church, made up here of many particular Churches: And thus oneness, or unity, is a great commendation to her, or a special part of her excellency. But, *2dly*, The invisible Church is but one, all believers make up one body; tho' there be many of different growths, yet there is but one Bride. This is a singular thing, and this makes for the scope, of commending the Bride; and points out two things, 1. That all the excellencies in believers combine in one, and that must be excellent; every one of them partakes of another's excellency, by vertue of the mutual union and communion they have with Christ, the Head and Husband, and one with another; as the beauty of the face adorns the leg, and the straightness of the legs commends the face, because both hold

forth

forth one glorious body. 2. It illustrates her commendation thus, There are many queens stately, many concubines and virgins lovely amongst men, yet one cannot be all: but (saith he) altho' there be many of these in the Church, yet is she *one*; and altho' she be one, yet is she all, collectively summing up all.

*Secondly, She is the only one of her mother:* This sets her out singularly and exclusively, there is not another but she. By *mother*, here, is understood the catholick Church, wherein children are conceived and brought forth; she is the mother of all that believe, Gal. 4. 26. *Jerusalem that is above, is free, which is the mother of us all.* This Church, considered as from the beginning of the world to the end, is one; and is the mother, in respect of the Church considered as being in this or that place for the time present, which is understood by us all; wherever we live, we belong to that mother, Gal. 4. 26. There is no Church but that one; and who are begotten to God, are brought forth by her, and belong to her.

*Thirdly, She is the choice one of her that bare her.* This sets her out comparatively, 1<sup>st</sup>, She is the choice one in respect of the world; this one Church is more excellent than the multitude of all the societies that are there. 2<sup>dly</sup>, She is the choice one in respect of all visible professors as such, she is beyond the daughters; amongst all her mother's children, or professing members of the Church, the believer doth excel. 3<sup>dly</sup>, The Church, considered complexly, doth excel particular believers, as having all their excellencies combined together: Or, the scope of these two verses being to prefer the Bride as singular, and eminently beyond all other beloveds, whether queens, concubines, such as are joined unto men; or virgins, such as are yet suited and sought for; we may conceive it thus, *My love*, (saith he) *my dove hath not a match, but is chief:* And as she called him the chief of all Beloveds, chap. 5. 10. so here he commends her as the most lovely of all Brides, that can be wedded or wooed: Altho' there be many of these, yet, 1. My dove is but one, that is, in respect of her singular excellency, she comprehends all. 2. *She is the only one of her mother;* there are no more of that family, that are born of that mother, beside her self, that I can set my heart on, or can match with: And thus all the world beside the believer is cried down. 3. Comparatively, *she is the choice one of her that bare her;* that is, not only by comparing her with the world, but by comparing her with all mere external professors, she is still the choice of all.

That this is the scope, is clear; and the enumerating of so many queens, concubines and virgins, doth illustrate it, either by shewing her singularity and perfection, as having all in her alone, which is to be had in many; or, by preferring her to all, altho' they be many: And thus, in his commending  
of

of her, he is even and equal with her in the commendation she gave him, which was both comparative, that he was *chief of ten thousand*; and also absolute and comprehensive, that he was *all desires*, that nothing was wanting, but that all things desirable were comprehended in him: So now he commends and extols her above all other, as having more in her alone than was to be found in all others; to shew that his love to her, and his estimation of her, was nothing inferior to hers of him; and that he was satisfied with her alone, without seeking to multiply queens or concubines, as many men of the world did.

This commendation out of Christ's mouth, of a Bride so undutiful, may seem strange; therefore, to make it unquestionable, he brings in a double confirmation, both which respect what goeth before, to make it the more convincing. The first is in the end of the ninth verse, and it is taken from that esteem that others had of her, *The daughters saw her, and they blessed her, &c.* This beauty (saith he) is real and singular, even such, that it makes on-lookers, the most glorious and discerning (not only the daughters, but even the queens and concubines) to be much affected; the beauty of my Bride is such as takes them all up. The *daughters*, that is, professors, *saw her*, they beheld this beauty of hers (as chap. 3. 6.) and *they blessed her*, that is, 1. They were convinced of her excellency, and accounted her blessed and happy, as *Mary* saith of her self, *Luke 1. 48.* And, 2. They wished well to her, desiring God to bless her, as, *Psal. 129. 8. We bless you in the Name of the Lord*; for, these two are comprehended in one man's blessing of another. Next, *the queens and concubines*, that is, these who, either in the world, or in the Church, are thought most of, *they praised her*; by which is understood some external expression of their esteem of her, and their endeavour to paint out her excellency and beauty to the view of others, so as they might fall in love with her: As the first then looks to the high thoughts, and inward esteem they had of her; so this looks to the outward expression of that esteem, by which they study to set her out in the eyes of all others: So they yielded the Bride to be excellent, and called her *fairest among women*, chap. 5. 9. which is an evidence of her loveliness, and of the loveliness of grace in an exercised believer; and whatever others thought of her, yet that such praised her, it shews, there was reality in the ground thereof. This is also spoken to their commendation, who did thus commend her; and it holds out, 1. The notice which he takes of the thoughts and words which men have of his Bride: Our Lord knows what men say or think of his people, and records it. 2. How pleasing it is to him, to have them speaking respectively of her, especially when she is exercised with any dark or afflicting dispensation.

Verse 10. *Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?*

The tenth verse may be taken as the expression of his own esteem of her, and so it begins the second proof of her excellency, that not only they, but he esteems of her. Or, the words may be looked on as the continuance of their praise, and be read thus, *They praised her, saying* (as often that word is to be supplied) *Who is she, &c?* If they be thus taken, the scope is the same, holding forth their esteem of her; and his repeating of it, shews his approbation thereof: And we incline to take the words in this sense, because it continues the series better, and shews their concurring in their thoughts of her, with what were his thoughts, *verse 4.* which is his scope. This is peculiarly taken notice of by him, as well-grounded praise, upon this account, that their thoughts were conform and agreeable to his. It will also difference the two confirmations better, to begin the second, *verse 11.* than to take the words simply as the Bridegroom's words, wherein the same thing for substance with what was said, *verse 4.* is repeated. However, in these words, her loveliness is set out, 1. In the manner of expression here used, *Who is she?* like that, *chap. 3. 6.* which was spoken by the daughters; and so this looks the liker to be spoken by them also, as wondering at her, *What is she?* This *she* must be some singular person, and so it proves his scope, laid down, *verse 9.* 2. The matter of the words sets out her loveliness in four expressions or similitudes, tending to one thing, namely, to shew the lightness (to speak so) of the Church, and her ravishing-beauty. The first similitude is, that *she looketh forth as the morning*: The morning is light, compared with the night, and refreshful; so the Bride is like the morning, compared with the world that is darkness: and she is lovely, cheering and heartsome to look-on, beyond all others; so the morning is often opposed to affliction and heartlessness, *Isa. 58. 8.* for, then birds and fields look cheerful, that before were dark and drooping. (2.) She is *fair as the moon*: The moon is the lesser of the two great lights, and was made to guide the night, and is a glorious creature, shining above all stars; so is the Bride like the moon in a dark night, very conspicuous and beautiful, and useful withal, to them that are acquaint with her. (3.) She is *clear as the sun*: This speaks yet more of her splendor, her taking-excellent beauty and usefulness, for the direction and comfort of the daughters that behold her; the sun being the most bright, light and glorious creature of the world, and the greater light that is singularly useful to the world. (4.) She is *terrible as an army with banners*, which was spoken to, on *verse 4.* and is here repeated, to shew that it is no common, effeminate beauty,

beauty, but a stately majesty, wherewith she is adorned, that hath an awfulness in it towards men, and a prevailing efficacy towards God. In sum, it describes the spiritual beauty of the Bride in these properties, 1. That it is lightsom and shining; there is no true glory but this, which is like the light, all other beauty is but dark: grace maketh one shine *like a light in a dark place*, Phil. 2. 15. 2. It is a growing beauty; every step of these similitudes ascends higher and higher, till the sun be rested in, *The way of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more until the perfect day*, Prov. 4. 24. 3. It is comprehensive, therefore it is compared to lights of all sorts: There is somewhat in grace that resembles every thing that is lovely, God's Image being therein eminently. 4. It is stately and awful, being convincing and captivating to on-lookers. 5. It is a beauty attended with a military and fighting condition, and therefore compared to armies: The highest commendation of believers doth insinuate them to be in a fighting posture; and the more stayedly they maintain their fight, and keep their posture, they will be the more beautiful. 6. A believer that prevails with Christ (as she did, *vers. 4. 5.*) will also be awful to others, as here she is, and will prevail over them, as the Lord saith to Jacob, Gen. 32. 28. *Thou hast prevailed with God*; and then follows, *thou shalt also prevail with men*.

Verse 11. *I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded.*

Verse 12. *Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.*

Follows now, in the 11th and 12th verses, the second proof of the reality of the beauty and stateliness of the Bride, which puts all out of controverſie; and this proof he takes from his own experience, respecting what was said, *vers. 4, 5.* and it may be summed thus, That must be stately beauty, that ravisheth me; (that is understood) but hers is such: This is proved from experience, *I went down* (saith he) *to the garden of nuts* (having withdrawn from that sensible communion which was entertained with the Spouse, as a man doth out of his chamber to his garden) and was looking to the case of my plants, according as the Bride had informed the daughters of Jerusalem, *verse 2.* but (saith he) *ere I was aware*, she did cast an eye after me, that so suddenly and effectually ravished me, that I could not but return, and that speedily, as if I had been mounted upon the swiftest chariots; and therefore this can-

not

not but be stately loveliness : Which agrees with, and relates to what is said, *verse 5. Thou hast overcome me* : And so we may look on the words, as if he therein, for her consolation, were giving her an account of his absence, and what he was doing ; and he shews her, that, even while he was absent, her cries (which *chap. 5. 6.* she thought had not been heard) and her looks to him, were not forgotten, nor slighted, even when to her sense she saw him not ; yet, even then (saith he) they pierced me, and made my affections warm, that I could not but be affected, and return, as now thou seest.

The 11th *verse* sheweth where he was, and what he was doing, when he was absent : The 12th *verse*, how he returned. The place, whither he went, was to the *garden of nuts*, that same which was called the garden and beds of spices, *verse 2.* His *going down*, is his withdrawing from her sense ; and, as in that same place, so here, his end is set out in two expressions (which expounds how he feeds in his gardens.) 1. It is to *see the fruits of the valley* : The Church, called the garden formerly, is here called the valley, because she is planted, as it were, in a good valley-soil, where fruits use to thrive best. His going to *see them*, holds forth his accurate observing in general how it is with them, and his taking delight (as it were) to recreate himself by beholding of them, as men do who visit their gardens. Next, and more particularly, it is to *see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded* : By *vine* and *pomegranate*, are understood particular believers, who are as several trees of his garden, as was cleared on *chap. 4. 13.* Their *flourishing*, or *budding*, looks to the beginnings of grace, scarce come to ripe fruit, but (as in the bud, *chap. 2. 15.*) being exceeding tender ; and these are mentioned distinctly, beside the former general, of *seeing the fruits*, to shew, (1.) His taking particular notice of every particular believer, as a man that goes from tree to tree in his garden. (2.) His special notice-taking of beginners, and of the beginnings of his work in them, as being especially delighted with the first buddings of grace, and careful that nothing wrong them : This is his feeding in his gardens, and his gathering *lilies*, to be delighted with fruitfulness in his people, even with their weak and tender beginnings, and to be solicitously careful of their good, as men use to be of the thriving of their fruit-trees.

*Observe,* 1. Where our Lord Jesus hath a garden, which he hath planted, and on which he takes pains, he looks for fruits ; His garden should never want fruit. 2. There are diverse growths, degrees or measures of grace amongst his people ; for, some of his trees have fruits, and some but blossoms. 3. Our Lord Jesus takes special notice of his peoples fruitfulness, and that as particularly of every one of them, as if he went from one to another (as the gardener doth from tree to tree) to discover it. 4. Our Lord Jesus is especially

cially delighted with the kindly blossomings of beginners, and he takes especial notice of the young and tender buddings of their grace, and will be so far from crushing them, because they are not ripe fruits, that he will more tenderly care for them. 5. Our Lord Jesus accurately takes notice of his Bride's carriage, and expects her fruitfulness, when he seems to her sense to be absent, and is especially much delighted with it then; for, when he is gone down to his garden, this is the errand, to see the fruits of the valley, whether, &c. when he withdraws, he hath a friendly design; yet, saith he, altho' that was intended, I was made (as it were) to alter my purpose, and not to stay.

And so we come to the 12th verse, in which is set down, how suddenly he is transported with affection to his Bride; while he is viewing her graces in his absence from her, he is so taken with love to her, that he can stay no longer from her. We may consider, in the verse, these three things, 1<sup>st</sup>, An effect, as it were, wrought on him; He is made like the chariots of Amminadib, or, set as in the chariots of Amminadib: Chariots were used to travel with, and that for the greater speed; or, they were used in war, for driving furiously (like Jehu) and mightily, over difficulties and obstructions in the way. The word *Amminadib* may be read in one word, and it is to be taken for a proper name of a prince, and thus the expression sets out excellent chariots, such as belonged possibly to some such valiant men of that name; or it may be read in two words, *Ammi nadib*, which in the original signify, *my willing people*: So, *Ammi* signifieth, *my people*, as, *Hos. 2. 1. Say to your brethren Ammi*, that is, *my people*: And *Nadib* is the same word that is rendred, *Psal. 110. 3. willing*, *Thy people shall be willing*; it is a princely beautifulness and willingness. The word, *chap. 8. 1. O Prince's daughter*, is from the same root; and we rather take it so here, as being more suitable to the scope: which shews what effect his Bride's affection had on him; and the word is often so elsewhere translated: and so it may be rendred, *The chariots of my princely willing people*: They get this name for their princely behaviour, in wrestling with him under difficulties. Again, the word, *I was made*, may be rendred, *was set* (according to the more usual interpretation of the word) thus the effect may be taken two ways, to one scope, 1. *I was made like the most swift chariots, for speedy return, that nothing could detain me from returning to my Bride*. Or, 2. If we may call the prayers, faith and love of his people, *their chariots*, he is set on them, as taking pleasure to ride and triumph in them, and to be brought back by them, as if by chariots sent from them he had been overcome: And this suits with what is spoken, *verse 5.* for, while he accounts her as an army, these must needs be her weapons and chariots, to wit, a longing willingness

to be at him, and foul-sickness, casting her eyes after him, and, in a manner, even fainting for him.

2dly, There is the manner how this effect is brought about; He is suddenly, as it were, surprized, *Or ever I was aware, &c. I knew not* (as if he said) *till I was transported with an irresistible power of love toward my Bride, who, in the exercise of faith, repentance and prayer, was seeking after me, while I had withdrawn my self.* The expression is borrowed from men (for, properly it agrees not to him) who by sudden effects, that fall out beyond their expectation, use to aggrege the wonderfulness of the cause that brings them about: Thus, *I know not how it was, it was or I was aware, or, while I was not thinking on it; so forcibly, and, as it were, insensibly the thing prevailed over me.* Christ expresseth it thus, to shew the wonderfulness of the thing that came on him, that he could not but do it, and could not shun it, more than if he had had no time to deliberate about it. This narration of Christ's is not to resent that effect, but to shew how natively it was brought forth; so that when they (to say so) sent their chariots to him, and did cast a look after him, he could not but yield, because he would yield, as the third thing in the verse shews, and that is, What it was that so easily prevailed with him; the cause is within himself, that set him on these chariots of his willing people, and made him to be overcome: It was was even *his soul, my soul made me, or set me*, that is, my inward soul, my affections, my bowels were so kindled (as it is *Jer. 31. 20.*) and my soul cleaved so to my loving and longing Bride, and was so stirred with her exercise, that I could not but hastily and speedily yield, because I could not resist my own affections. Hence, *Obs. 1.* Willingness is much prized by Jesus Christ; when the soul yields to open to him, and longs for him, *verse 5.* and cannot want him, there Christ (as *chap. 5. 6.*) will not, and cannot continue at a distance. 2. Altho' Christ's affection doth not properly surprize him, nor do the effects thereof fall from him inadvertantly, but most deliberately, yet both his affection, and the effects thereof, are most wonderful and astonishing in themselves, and ought, as such, in a singular manner to affect us. 3. The first rise and cause of all the believer's good, and that which makes their faith, prayer, love, &c. bear weight with Christ, is in himself; it is his own soul, and good-will, that overcomes and prevails with him in all these: It is not any worth or power in their graces, as considered in themselves, that hath this influence upon him, but his intimate love to believers themselves, that makes their graces have such weight with him: All that ever came speed with him, were prevented by his love. 4. The believer hath a notable friend in Christ's own bosom; his soul is friendly to them, and is in a kindly-way affected with their conditions, even though in his dispensations no such thing appear: And while he is man,

and hath a soul, they want not a friend. 5. Considering this as the exercise of his soul, when he was withdrawn to her sense, and she was complaining, *Observe*, That Christ's bowels and soul are never more affected toward his people, than when he seems most offended with them, and when they are most affected with the wrongs done to him, *Jer.* 31. 19, 20. *Judg.* 10. 16. There be many inconceivable turnings in his bowels, even when he seems to speak against them to their sense, then he *earnestly remembers them still*; and their friend *love*, steps to, and takes part for them, and so prevails, that by his own bowels he is restrained from executing the fierceness of his anger (*Hos.* 11. 8. compared with 9.) and constrained even when he is provoked to take some other course, to express marvellous loving kindness to them.

Verse 13. *Return, return, O Shulamite, return, return, that we may look upon thee: What will ye see in the Shulamite? as it were the company of two armies.*

The thirteenth verse continueth the same scope, and is a confirmation of the interpretation given of the former verse, and a new expression of his love, whereby as a kind husband, having forgotten bypast failings in his wife; he invites her to return to her former familiarity, with a motive signifying the love which he had to her, and that upon so good ground (in his gracious estimation) as that, by her yielding to return, he puts no question, but what he had spoken of her stately terribleness, would be found to be a truth. The verse contains these three, *First*, A most affectionate invitation. *Secondly*, A most loving motive proposed, perswading to embrace it, which is his end. *Thirdly*, An objection removed, whereby the motive is confirmed and illustrate. In the exhortation or invitation, consider, *1st*, The party invited, or called. *2dly*, The duty called for. *3dly*, Its repetition. The party called, is a *Shulamite*: This word comes either from *Solomon*, as the husband's name is named over the wife, *Isa.* 4. 1. and it is from the same root, that signifies peace, from which *Solomon* had his name; and it is in the *feminine gener*, because it is app'ied to the Bride. Thus it holdeth forth, (1.) The strict union betwixt him and her, that she with him partakes of the same name: See *Jer.* 23. 6. compared with *Jer.* 33. 16. where ye will find the like communication of his name to her. (2.) It shews the privilege she was admitted unto, through her tye to him, and union with him, by which she is made his, and is admitted to share with him in all that is his; for, it is not an empty stile she gets, while called by his name, it being to signify that she was his, and that whatever he had (whereof she was capable, and might be for her good) was hers. (3.) It shews his affection that he so names her now, wishing her a part of his own peace,

peace, and intitling her to it. Or, Secondly, this word may be derived from *Salem*, which, properly taken, is *Jerusalem*, *Psal.* 76. 1. and *Heb.* 7. 1. *Melchisedec* was king of *Salem*, which signifieth peace; and so, as *Shunamitish* comes from *Shunem*, so *Shulamite* from *Salem*; and so, taking the derivation thus, it comes to the same thing with the former, both being derived from the same root: And this holds forth his respect to her, as acknowledging her new-birth and original, from the new *Jerusalem*.

2dly, The exhortation is, *return*: This implies, 1. A distance whether in respect of sin, *Jer.* 3. 1. for, sin breeds distance betwixt Christ and his people, *Isa.* 59. 2. or, in respect of sensible manifestations of his love; for, howsoever the distance, brought on by sin, was in some measure taken away, and she returned to her former obedience and wonted tenderness, yet she wants the sense of his love, and is seeking after it: *Return*, here then, supposeth somewhat of these. 2. A duty laid on her, to quit this distance, and to return; this the very expression bears. 3. A kind offer of welcome, which is implied in his offers and exhortations, whenever he calls: So, *Jer.* 3. 14. *Jer.* 4. 1. and thus the sense is, as if he had said, There hath been a distance betwixt us, and thou art suspicious of my love; but, return and come hither, and neither thy former faults, nor present jealousy shall be remembered: And this shews, that the words are his, both because the scope is continued, and also because none can call the Bride properly or effectually to return, but he; neither would the voice of another be so confirming to her of his affection, and his scope is to confirm her, as to that.

3dly, This exhortation is twice doubled, *Return, return*, and again, *return, return*: (1.) To shew the hazard she was in. (2.) Her duty to prevent it. (3.) The necessity of speedy putting the exhortation in practice. (4.) The difficulty that there was to bring her over her discouragements. (5.) His great and earnest desire to have them all removed, and to have the duty performed. These words shew, 1. That there may be a distance betwixt Christ and his Bride; even the beautiful believer may fall into a distance of sin, 2dly, Of indisposition, 3dly, Of comfortlessness, and 4thly, Of discouragement and heartlessness, which follows on the former. 2. There is often a lothness to come home, when there hath been a straying; discouragement and shame may prevail so far, as to scar fainting believers (who fain would have him) from hearty applying of his allowances to themselves. 3. Souls that are at distance with Christ, whatever kind of distance it be, would not sit down under it, or give way to it, but wrestle from under it, over all difficulties that are in their way. 4. This would be done speedily, and without all delay, dispute or dallying, therefore doth the Lord so double his call; there will, sure, be no advantage by delaying, or putting off this great business, of returning from our distance

to him. 5. The return of a believer, after a slip, to confident walking with Christ, and comforting of themselves in him, is allowed by him, and well pleasing to him, as well as the conversion and coming home of a sinner at first. 6. Believers, after their slips, are not easily perswaded of Christ's kindness, in the measure that he hath it to them; nor are they easily brought to that confidence of it, that formerly they had. 7. Our Lord Jesus allows his people to be fully confident of his love, and of obtaining welcome from him; for which reasons, this return, as a sure evidence and testimony of his kind and hearty welcome, is four times repeated, to shew that he is entreating and waiting for it, and cannot abide to have it delayed.

*Secondly*, The end proposed, that makes him so serious, is in these words, *That we may look upon thee*: It doth him good (to speak so) to get a sight of her. This looking of his, is not for curiosity, but for delightfom satisfaction to his affection, as one desires to look upon what he loves; so, chap. 2. 14. speaking to his Bride, *Let me see* (saith he) *thy face, for thy countenance is comely*. This is to take away all jealousy from the Bride, and to shew how he was taken with her, so that her returning would be a singular pleasure to him, which is indeed wonderful.

*Obs.* 1. Our Lord Jesus allows the Bride, when returning to him after her departings from him, to be confident in him, and familiar with him. 2. The more that nearness to him be sought after and entertained, he is the more satisfied. 3. When believers hide themselves from Christ, even tho' it be through discouragement, and upon just ground and reason, as they think; yet doth it some way marr Christ's delightfom complacency, and he is not satisfied till they shake off their discouragement, and shew themselves to him with confidence.

Again, we would consider, that it is not said, that *I may look on thee*; but, that *we*, &c. Which is to shew, that she is delightfom to many, her beauty may be seen by any that will look upon her. This word, *we*, 1. may import the blessed Trinity, the Father, Son and Spirit; as, chap. 1. 11. *we will make*, &c. A returning sinner will be welcome to all the Persons of the Godhead. 2. *We*, that is, I with the angels, who (Luke 15. 10.) *rejoice at the conversion of a sinner*. And, 3. *We* may import, I and all the daughters that admire thee. The thriving of one believer, or the returning of a sinner, may make many cheerful, and is to be accounted a lovely thing by all the professors of religion.

*Thirdly*, The third thing in the verse comes in by way of question, either to heighten the loveliness that is in Christ's Bride: What is it that is to be seen in her? as, Luke 7. 24, &c. *What went ye out for to see?* No common sight: Or, it is to meet with an objection that strangers may have, *What de-*  
light-

lightsom thing is to be seen in her, that seems so despicable? Or, she her self might object, *What is in me worth the seeing?* It may be, when it is well seen, that it be less thought of. The Lord, to prevent such doubts, especially in her, moves the question, that he himself may give the answer; *What (saith he) will ye see in the Shulamite?* (that is) which may be pleasant and delightful: And he answers, *as it were the company of two armies*; which in general holds out, 1st, We will see much majesty and stateliness in her; even so much as I have asserted, in comparing her to an army with banners. 2dly, Two armies may be mentioned, to shew, that when she is rightly, and with a believing eye, looked upon, her beauty will appear to be double to what it was said to be: And so, *two armies* signify an excellent army; as, *Gen. 32. 1, 2.* God's hosts of angels get the same name in the Original, it is *Mahanaim*, that same which *Jacob* imposeth as the name upon the place, where these hosts of angels met: And there may be an allusion to this, these two ways, (1.) Ask ye what is to be seen in her? Even as it were *Mahanaim*, that is, for excellency she is like an host of angels, such as appeared to *Jacob*; she is an angelick sight, more than an ordinary army. This is a notable commendation, and serves his purpose well, which is to confirm her: and therefore, that his poor Bride may be encouraged to press-in on him, and return to him, he tells her, She may be as homely with him as angels, that are holy and sinless creatures; which is a wonderful privilege, yet such as is allowed on his people, by him who hath not taken on the nature of angels, but of men, that he might purchase them a room amongst angels that stand by, *Zech. 3. 6, 7.* (2.) It may allude thus, What is to be seen in her? whatever it be to the world, it is to me (saith he) excellent and refreshful, as these hosts of angels were to *Jacob* at *Mahanaim*, when he had been rescued from *Laban*, and was to meet with *Esau*. Either of these suits well the scope, and saith, It will be, and is a sweet and refreshing meeting, that is betwixt Christ and a returning sinner, a little view whereof is in that parable, *Luke 15. 20.* of the prodigal his father's hearty receiving of his lost son, and making himself and all his servants merry with him.

*Obj. 1.* Our Lord Jesus is very tender of believers doubts and perplexities; and therefore prevents their objections which they may make, by giving answers to them, before the objections be well formed or stated in their hearts. 2. Believers may, and usually do, wonder what ground there is in them, for such kindness as Christ shews to them, when he magnifieth them and their graces so much, that are so defective and full of blemishes: And indeed it is such, that are readiest to wonder most at his love, and esteem least of themselves, whom he makes most of, and of whom he hath the greatest esteem. 3. It is a wonderful welcome that Christ gives to repenting sinners; he receives

ceives them as angels, and admits them to such freedom with him, and hath such esteem of them, as if they were angels: for, to be received *as an angel*, signifies honourable and loving entertainment, *Gal. 4. 14.* 4. The returning of sinners to Christ, and Christ's loving welcome which he gives them upon their return, makes a heartsom and refreshing meeting betwixt him and them: And O what satisfaction and joy shall there be, when they, being all gathered together, shall meet with him at the last day!

## C H A P. VII.

### Vers. 1, 2, 3. BRIDEGROOM.

**T**HIS chapter hath two parts: In the first, reaching to the tenth verse, Christ continueth in the commendation of his Bride: In the second, thence to the close, the Bride expresth her complacency in him and in his love, her enlarged desires after communion with him, and that she might be found fruitful to his praise.

That it is Christ, the Bridegroom, who was speaking in the end of the former chapter, that continues his speech throughout the first part of this, there is no just ground to question; the scope, stile and expressions being so like unto, and co-incident with what went before: And what is spoken in the first person, *verse 8.* can be applied to none other, neither would it become any to speak thus but himself, his love is enlarged and loosed (as it were) in its expressions; and this love of his is indeed a depth, that is not easily reached. In this commendation he doth, *1st*, Enumerate ten particulars (as she had done when she commended him, *chap. 5.*) Then, *2dly*, He shews his acquiescing in her, as being ravished with her beauty, *verse 6, &c.* We had occasion to say something in the general of such commendations, *chap. 4. 1.* which is now to be remembred, but not repeated; we take this to be understood after the same manner as that was: And altho' the visible Church be in some respect Christ's Bride, and therefore we will not condemn the application of some of the parts of this commendation to her, as so considered; yet, since the scope is mainly to comfort true believers as differenced from others, and that it is she to whom he speaks, who had ravished him with her eyes in the former chapter (which can agree properly to the true believer only) and considering also, that some parts of the commendation do respect inherent grace in his people (and indeed it is this which is the great ground of the Bride's commendation) we therefore incline still to take these commendations, as holding

ding forth the continuance of the expressions of Christ's love to these, who are his own by saving faith; and so much the rather, as the words, being taken so, are of special and particular use for believers.

There are four differences, in this commendation, from that mentioned, chap. 4. and that which was spoken to, on chap. 6. 6, 7. which, by answering four questions, we shall clear.

*Quest. 1.* Wherefore is this subjoined now, after so large a commendation in the words immediately preceeding? *Ans.* The former commendation shews Christ's love to his Bride (to say so) immediately after their marriage, or on the back of some agreement, after an out-cast; but this is added, to shew what is Christ's ordinary way of carriage to his people, and what are his usual thoughts (to say so) of them: He is not kind only at fits (as men sometimes use to be, and do not continue) or, when he was surprized, as it were, with a sudden gale of affection, chap. 6. 12. no, he is constantly kind; and therefore these expressions are now renewed, to shew that such are his ordinary kind ways of dealing towards them, even when there is no connexion betwixt his dealing and their present condition, nor any thing in them that can be looked on as the immediate rise thereof: Our blessed Lord is a most fair, loving and friendly speaker unto, and converser with his Bride.

*Quest. 2.* Why is this commendation enlarged beyond the former, having moe particulars in it? *Ans.* Thereby the Lord shews, 1. The sovereignty of his love, in making the intimations thereof, less or more as he pleaseth. 2. The last commendation is most full, in expressing the riches of his love, to shew that Christ never speaks so kindly to one of his own, but there is more behind in his heart than hath yet vented it self; and that there is more, which they may expect from him, than they have yet met with, however that may be very much. 3. It is to make it the fresher unto them, when by this it is evidenced to be a new intimation of his kindness, altho' it proceed on the same grounds, on which former intimations did: And this may be a reason also of the third difference, and question following, which is,

3. Why are the same parts named, as eyes, hair, &c. and yet the commendation is different from what it was, for the most part? *Ans.* 1. This is to shew the beauty of grace, which is such, that one commendation cannot reach it. 2. The account that he in his love hath of her, which is so great, that one expression doth not fully answer it. 3. The various and abundant ways that love hath to speak comfortably to a believer; there is strange eloquence and rhetorick in the love of Christ, when he thinks good to vent it.

*Quest. 4.* Why is the way, he followed before, changed? He began formerly at the head, now at the feet. *Ans.* This is also a piece of his sovereignty, and shews how he delights to vary the expressions of his love to his

people; and that it may be seen, that, whatever way we will follow in looking upon grace in a believer, it is still beautiful in itself, and acceptable to him.

**Verse 1.** *How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.*

The first verse contains two pieces of the Bride's commendation: The first part that is commended is the *feet*, *How beautiful are thy feet?* &c. In this consider the title she gets. 2. The part commended. 3. The commendation itself. 4. The manner of expressing of it. *First*, The title is, *O prince's daughter!* This was not given her before; it is now prefixed to this commendation in general, to usher in all that follows, and to make it the more gaining on her affection. The word in the first language is, *Nadib*, which signifies a bounteous prince, or, one of a princely disposition, *Isa. 32.* 5. it is given to the visible Church, *Psal. 45.* 13. *The King's daughter is all glorious within.* For more full taking up of the meaning, consider, that it doth here include these three, (1.) A nobleness and greatness in respect of birth, that the Bride is honourably descended: From which we may learn, that believers (whatever they be in respect of the flesh) are of a royal descent and kindred, a royal priesthood, *1 Pet. 2.* 9. *sons and daughters to the Lord God Almighty,* *2 Cor. 6.* 18. (2.) It respects her qualifications, as being princely in her carriage, suitable to such a birth, *Eccles. 10.* 17. Hence observe, the believer should be of a princely disposition and carriage; and when he is right, he will be so; for, he is indued with princely qualifications, with noble and excellent principles, beyond the most generous, noble, gallant and stately dispositions of men in the world: A believer, when right, or in good case, is a princely person indeed. (3.) It respects her provision and expectation; that she is provided for, waited upon, and to be dealt with, and even dalted, not as children of mean persons, but of princes, to whom it is her Father's good pleasure to give a kingdom, and such a one as is undefiled, and fadeth not away, *Luke 12.* 32. *1 Pet. 1.* 4. Hence observe, That the believer is royally dealt with by Jesus Christ, and hath a royal princely allowance bestowed on him; the charter of adoption takes in very much, even to *inherit with him all things*: No less than this may be expected, and is the claim of a daughter to the King of kings, *Rev. 21.* 7. : revealed a

*Secondly*, The part commended is, *the feet*; by which a believer's walk and conversation, as grace shines in it, is understood, as we may see frequently, *Psal. 119.* 4. 59, 101, 105. So likewise, shedding of blood, or other defiling sins, such as leave foul prints upon a man's conversation behind them, are called

led the *iniquities of the heels*, Psal. 49. 5. by which the nakedness and offensiveness of one's conversation is set forth: And on the contrary, the Bride's feet, thus commended, set out her good conversation.

*Thirdly*, Her feet are commended from this, that they are not bare, but, *beautiful with shoes*. To be bare-footed, imports three things in scripture, 1<sup>st</sup>, A shameful condition, *Isa.* 20. 4. 2<sup>dly</sup>, A present sad affliction, the sense whereof makes men careless of what is adorning; so *David*, *2 Sam.* 15. 30. under heavy affliction, walks bare-footed. 3<sup>dly</sup>, An unfitness to travel; therefore, when the people were to be in readiness for their journey, *Exod.* 12. 11. their feet were to be shod. So then, to have on shoes, doth on the contrary import three things, 1. The honourable estate and dignity to which believers are advanced; and more especially, it holds out a singular beautiful-ness in their walk, whereby their shame is covered. 2. A thriving in their spiritual condition. 3. A readiness and promptness of obedience to what they are called unto: All which are beautiful in themselves, and adorning to the believer. We take it, in a word, to hold out a conversation such as *becomes the gospel*, *Philip.* 1. 27. which is, to have the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, *Eph.* 6. 15. because that as, by shoes, men are enabled to walk without hurt in rough ground, and are in the company of others not ashamed of their nakedness; so a gospel-conversation quiets the mind, keeping it in peace against difficulties, and doth exceedingly strengthen the confidence of believers in their conversing with others, and becomes exceeding lovely, that they care not (as it were) who see them; as, *Ezek.* 16. 10. *I shod thee*, &c. Whereas a disorderly conversation is shameful, even like one that is bare-footed.

*Fourthly*, The manner of the expression is, to aggrege the loveliness of a well ordered walk, *How beautiful are thy feet with shoes!* It cannot be told how beautiful a tender and well ordered conversation is; *It is exceeding lovely, and acceptable to me* (saith he) *to see thy holy walk*.

*Obs.* 1. Our Lord Jesus takes notice of every step of a believer's carriage, and can tell whether their feet be shod or bare, whether their conversation be such as adorneth or shameth the Gospel. 2. The believer hath, or at least ought to have, and, if he be like himself, will have a well ordered walk, and will be in his carriage stately and princely. 3. A conversation, that is well ordered, is a beautiful and pleasant thing: Grace, exercised in a Christian's practice, is more commendable to Christ, than either greatness, riches, wisdom, or what the world esteems most of; none of these hath such a commendation from Christ, as the believer, who, it may be, is not much in the world's esteem: Practical holiness is a main part of spiritual beauty, and is valuable above speculative knowledge and many gifts. 4. Believers should be

walking creatures, therefore hath the new nature feet; that is, they should be much in the practice of holy duties, according to the commands he hath given in his word: and in their way they should be making progress towards perfection; for, that is their mark, *Phil. 3. 13.* Sitting still, or negligence, much more going backward, is unlike a believer. 5. The conversation of all others, tho' never so fair'd with much civility, and great profession, and many parts, is yet naked and abominable before God, and subject to bruifings, stumblings, and such inconveniences as feet that are bare are liable to. 6. A well ordered walk is sure and safe: *He that walks uprightly walks surely, Prov. 10. 9.* And, saith the Psalmist, *Great peace have they who love thy law, and nothing shall offend them, Psal. 119. 165.* Their feet are shod against an evil time, and there is nothing safer when offences abound than that.

The second part of the commendation is to the same scope, *The joints of thy thighs, &c.* It is the coupling and turnings of them, as the word bears; they are also useful in motion, and help the feet to stir: the same thing is intended as in *chap. 5. 15.* by his thighs or legs; only it seems to look to the principles of their walk, as the feet do respect their way more immediately. These are compared to *jewels*, which are precious and comely, serving much for adorning; and it is not to ordinary jewels, to which they are compared, but such as are the *work of the hands of a cunning, skilful artificer, or workman*, that is, such as are set orderly and dexterously, by skill and art; the work, not of a novice, but of one that is expert: by which, not only the matter of their practice is holden forth to be solid, but also, in respect of the principles from which their way and duties have their spring and rise, and the manner of their performing them, they are rightly gone about, with an holy kind of art and dexterity: Which saith, 1. That there are many things necessarily concurring in a well ordered conversation; there must be skill to do rightly, what is in it self right, to make it commendable: it is needful that holy duties, and what is on the matter called for, be done in the right manner, and according to art, and not put by thus, and so. 2. Believers are singularly expert, in doing of the same duties of religion which other men do, they do them in another manner. 3. The several pieces of a holy walk are in a manner but spilt, when not rightly ordered, and every one put in their own place, like jewels undexterously set by one that is unskilful. 4. There is an holy art required to these that would walk commendably; and men naturally are unskilful in such practices, until they be taught them. 5. Being right in the manner, is no less necessary to make a man's way commendable, than to be right in the matter; as much of the commendation lies in this, as in the other: When these two go together in a believer's conversation, it is excellent and beautiful; there is no jewel, ~~more~~ finely set, comparable to a well ordered walk.

6. Believers

6. Believers, that use to walk in the way of godliness, may attain to this spiritual dexterity and skilfulness in a great measure ; and there is no other way of attaining of it, but by accustoming our selves to it : when her feet are once shod, this commendation follows, that *the joints of her thighs are like jewels.*

Verse 2. *Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor ; thy belly is like an heap of wheat, set about with lilies.*

In the second verse, the Lord proceeds, from the *thighs*, to the *navel* and *belly* : Which parts were not touched in her commendation, *chap. 4.* These parts in mens bodies have not much beauty in them ; and therefore, it seems, that by them the Lord points rather at what is inward and useful, in the spiritual complexion and constitution of believers, than what is outward and visible in their walk, that serving no less to their commendation than this.

The navel hath much influence on the intestines ; and when it is sound, it furthers much the health of the whole body ; so, *Prov. 3. 8.* it is said, the fear of the Lord *shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones* ; that is, it will be exceeding useful and profitable for thy well-being, as it is useful for the body to have that part in good case : And, on the contrary, a wretched miserable condition (such as is our condition by nature) is described by this, *Thy navel was not cut, &c. Ezek. 16. 4.* It is known also, that, in nature, the navel hath much influence on the child in the womb, which may be especially taken notice of here, as appears by the following commendation, namely, that *it is like a round goblet*, that is, well formed and proportioned (opposite to a *navel not cut, Ezek. 16. 4.*) *which wanteth not liquor*, that is, furnished with moisture for the health of the body, or entertainment and nourishment of the child in the womb.

Before we further clear the words, or observe any thing from them, we shall join to this the fourth part here commended, and that is, *the belly* : The word differs, in the original, from that which is translated *belly*, being spoken of him, *chap. 5. 14.* and it is taken for the inward parts, *Jer. 15. 35. Prov. 18. 8.* It hath a special influence on the health of the body, and on the bringing forth of children : It is here compared to *an heap of wheat* ; to *an heap*, to shew her bigness, as being with child, and still fruitful, and that in abundance : To *an heap of the grain of wheat*, to shew, it was not big with wind, but with good grain, even the best, whereby she feeds him, her self, and others. And so, as in the former similitude, she is represented to be furnished with liquor, so here she is set forth to be furnished with bread, whereby her spiritual liveness and healthfulness may be understood. Again, this heap of wheat is said to be *set about with lilies*, not only thereby to express its beautifulnes, with  
its

its usefulness, but also the fruitfulness thereof, in having particular graces, as lilies, growing about it, which are moistened and nourished by these two parts, the navel and the belly. Now we conceive, that most likely (though it be hard to be peremptory) the graces of the Spirit may be understood here, which being infused in their habits, and drawn forth in their actings by the influences of the Spirit, are compared to waters and liquor, and are said to be in the belly of the believer, *John 7. 38. (He that believes on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of waters)* because they have such influence on the new man, and (to speak so) are the health of the navel thereof. In sum, the sense of the words comes to this, O prince's daughter, thou hast a lively spiritual constitution, by the inward flowings of the Spirit, whereby thy navel is formed and beautified (which was by nature otherwise) and therefore thou art not barren, but fruitful, and that of the most precious fruits. Hence, observe, 1. That believers inward constitution and frame is no less beautiful than their outward conversation and walk: This *King's daughter is all glorious within*, *Psal. 45. 13.* 2. Soundness within, or heart-soundness, is no less needful than outward fruits, for compleating a believer's commendation; to have the navel well formed, is as necessary and requisite, as to have the feet beautiful with shoes. 3. Inward liveliness, or a well furnished inside, hath most influence on a believer's liveliness in all external duties. This keeps all fresh, being like precious liquor which makes Christ's Spouse fruitful and big, and that not with wind, but wheat.

**Verse 3.** *Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.*

The two breasts (which is the first part here commended) are spoken to in this third verse. They were spoken of, *chap. 4. 5.* with the same commendation; and we conceive the same thing, hinted there, is aimed at here, namely, to shew, that as she was healthful in her self, and prosperous (like that which is said, *Job 21. 24. His breasts are full of milk*) so was she both fitted to communicate, and loving in communicating the graces that was in her, as nurses, their milk to their children: Which clears, that the scope in short is to shew, that the believer is not only a beautiful bride, but a fruitful mother for bringing forth, *verse 2.* and nourishing and bringing up, *verse 3.* which was (especially in these times) a great commendation of a wife, and a thing that engaged husband's to them, *Psal. 128. 3. Gen. 29. 34.* as on the contrary, barrenness was a reproach to themselves, and a burden to their husbands: Now, Christ's Bride hath breasts, and is furnished as becomes a mother and a wife, contrary to that of the little sister, *chap. 8. 8.* whose desolate condition is set out by this, that she had no breasts; and this is repeated particularly, to shew the Lord's particular taking notice thereof, and his respect thereunto.

Verse 4.

Verse 4. *Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fish-pools in Heshbon, by the gate of Beth-rabbim: Thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon, which looketh toward Damascus.*

In the fourth verse, three more of the Bride's parts (which make the sixth, seventh and eighth) are commended. The sixth is the *neck*: It was spoken of, chap. 4. 4. neither doth the commendation differ much. There, it was said to be like the *tower of David*; here it is *as a tower of ivory*, that is, both comely and precious, being made of the *Elephant's* teeth, a tower whereof, must be very precious; and by this, we conceive, the great defensive efficacy of faith is set forth, which is still a tower, yet comparable to many, it is so excellent and sure: they dwell safely who are believers, because they dwell in God, and in his Son, Jesus Christ. And so we may here observe, 1. Faith is a precious defence; for, Christ is a precious hiding-place, and faith must be precious, because Christ is precious: Hence, it is not only precious as ivory, but *much more precious than gold*, 1 Pet. 1. 7. 2. Faith is a sure defence, and is the believer's tower, whereto he betakes himself, when he hath to do. 3. It is lovely and pleasant to Christ, when believers by faith betake themselves to him; he will never quarrel with them for it, seeing he so commends it. 4. There is no safe tower to any of the world, but what the believer hath; for, he, and he only, hath a tower of ivory to make use of: Christ is the only rock and sure foundation, and it is only believers that build their house upon him.

The seventh part, instanced, is *her eyes*, which were several times mentioned before; they point at her spiritual discerning and understanding of spiritual things, and the believing-uptaking of them; in which respect, all natural men are blind, because of their ignorance and unbelief; she only hath *eyes*. They are compared to *fish-pools in Heshbon, at the gate of Beth-rabbim*: This city *Heshbon* is mentioned, *Numb. 21. 25, 26*. It was a royal city, where *Sihon* king of the *Amarites* dwelt; and it is like, there hath been some place there called *Beth-rabbim*, for the great resort that was made thereunto: And the fish-pools that were there, it seems, were excellent and clear, and fit to give a shadow to these who looked into them. Now it would seem, that believers' eyes are compared to these pools, because of the clear, distinct and believing knowledge they have of themselves, of Christ, and of other spiritual objects. And from this we may observe, 1. That solid and distinct knowledge in spiritual things, is very commendable. 2. That a believer hath another kind of insight in spiritual things, than the most understanding natural man: he hath *eyes* in respect of him; the natural man (who hath no experimental, nor believing knowledge of spiritual things) is but blind. 3. He is sharpest sighted.

fighited that discerns himself, and can rightly take up his own condition; *the wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way*: So believers eyes, or knowledge, is compared to a fish-pond, that gives representations of a man's face to him.

The eighth particular is, *the nose* (it was not mentioned in her commendation, chap. 4.) It is not to be taken here for the whole countenance, but for a part thereof; therefore it is distinguished from the eyes, and is described as being eminent (like a tower) beyond the rest of the face; and so it is to be applied to the nose properly, which ariseth with a height on the face, like a tower, and is the seat of smelling, to discover what is hurtful, or savoury; also anger or zeal appear in it, therefore is it in the *Hebrew* language, in the Old Testament, sometimes put for these, because it shews a real indignation, when a man's anger smokes forth at his nose, *Psal.* 18. 8. It is said, 1. to be like *the tower of Lebanon*: There is no particular mention of such a tower, but, that *Solomon* built there a stately house, *2 Chron.* 8. 3. called the house of the forrest of *Lebanon*, wherein, *2 Chron.* 9. 15, 16. he put many targets and shields; and *Lebanon* being on the north of *Judah*, near to *Syria* (where enemies soon brake out against *Solomon*) it is not unlike, but either this house was made use of as a frontier-tower, or that some other was there builded, for preventing of hurt from that hand; to which this alludes. Next, this tower is said to look toward *Damascus*: *Damascus* was the head city of *Syria*; so, *Isa.* 7. 8. it is said, *the head of Syria is Damascus*: these that dwelt in it, were at that time amongst the most malicious enemies that *Israel* had; they were so in *David's* time, *2 Sam.* 8. 5. he slew two and twenty thousand of them; they were so in *Solomon's* time, *1 Kings* 11. 24. *Rezon* (whom God raised up to be an enemy to him) did reign in *Damascus*; and generally they continued to do so. They lay on the north of *Judah* (therefore it is called evil from the north, which came from *Syria*) and *Lebanon* was on the north border of *Israel*, next to it: and it is like, that, for this cause, either *Solomon* did change that place into a tower, or built some other of new, to be a watch especially against that enemy, which was his chief enemy, to prevent the hurt that might come from that hand; therefore, it is said to look toward (or to the face of) *Damascus*, as having a special respect to that enemy. Now, we conceive, that by this, the Bride's watchfulness and zeal, in prosecuting and maintaining her spiritual war against her enemies, is understood; as also, her sagacity, in smelling and discovering the stirrings and motions of her spiritual enemies, as the nose doth easily smell and discover what is pleasant or hurtful to sense. Christ's Bride hath many enemies, and some more terrible than others; therefore, she hath her watches, and (as it were) sentinels at the post, to observe their motions, especially she hath an eye upon her most inveterate and malicious enemy, the enemy nearest her doors, that is naturally most pre-

predominant, and her great care is to be kept from *her iniquity*, Pſal. 18. 21. This, we conceive, agrees both with the ſcope, and alſo with the deſcription and comparison here made uſe of.

*Obſ.* 1. The moſt beautiful Bride of our Lord Jeſus hath enemies, and ſuch enemies as are ſtrongly ſeated and fortified (as the *Syrians* at *Damaſcus* were) to watch againſt. 2. There are ſome particular quarters, or enemies, from which, and by which, believers often ſuffer moſt; and although they have enemies on all hands, yet is there ordinarily ſome one particular enemy, more terrible, malicious and predominant than others, from which they are moſt in danger. 3. Believers ſhould ever be on their watch againſt thoſe enemies, and muſt neither make peace with them, nor be negligent to provide againſt them. 4. Although the believer ſhould not be ſecure or careleſs, in reference to any ill, but every evil is to be carefully watched againſt; yet, where one ill doth more often aſſault him than others, and is more ſtrong, by the concurrence of tentations from without, or from his own inclination within, there the believer hath need of a ſpecial watch. 5. This watchfulneſs, impartially extended, and conſtantly maintained, is a main piece of ſpiritual beauty, and hath much influence on the adorning of a believer, and is a good evidence of a perſon that is commendable before Jeſus Chriſt.

Verse 5. *Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple : the King is held in the galleries.*

The firſt of *verſe 5.* contains the ninth and tenth particulars, that are commended in the Bride : The ninth is her *head*; It looks here to be taken for the uppermoſt part of the head (from which ſenſe and motion do flow) as being diſtinct from eyes and noſe; therefore it is ſaid, *Thy head upon thee*, to wit, upon and above thoſe parts before mentioned : Next, it is ſaid to be *like Carmel*; which may be underſtood, 1. As it relates to a fruitful place, mentioned with *Sharon*, Iſa. 35. 2. The excellency of *Carmel* and *Sharon*. 2. It may be tranſlated *ſcarlet* or *crimſon*, as the ſame word is, 2 *Chron.* 3. 14. thus it is a rich colour, wherewith princes and great men uſed to be decored : and the hair being in the next words compared to purple, it is not unlike, that it is taken for a colour here alſo.

By *head*, we muſt underſtand either Chriſt himſelf, who ſtands in that relation to the believer, and in reſpect of dignity is called a *head* to all men, 1 *Cor.* 11. 3. Or, 2. (which is not inconfiſtent with the former) ſome grace in the believer, acting on Chriſt, and quickning the new life; and ſeeing the ſcope is to commend the believer from inherent grace, and the new nature being compared to an inner-man, which is deſcribed from its ſeveral parts, and

so must have an head, we think that it is some particular grace that is here especially aimed at. By *head* then, we conceive, the grace of hope may be understood, it being the grace whereby the soul sticks to Christ, expecting the enjoyment of him; for, not only is hope a grace necessary and commendable (and so it cannot be unsuitable to the scope, to take it in upon one branch or other) but it may be called the head, (1.) Because it is above, having Christ himself for its object: and though the word may be said to be the object of hope, yet it is not so much the word, as Christ held forth in the word; and therefore, hope is said to be *within the veil*, Heb. 6. 19. for, properly we hope for him, because of his word; and so he is *our hope*, 1 Tim. 1. 1. (2.) Hope is a grace, which hath its rise from faith, and is supported by it, as the head is by the neck: though hope be some way above faith, yet doth faith sustain it, and give it a being; the believer hopes, because he believes. (3.) It hath much influence on all spiritual duties, and especially on our consolation, and is useful in the spiritual war, as being an essential piece of the believer's spiritual armour, and is therefore called the *helmet* or head-piece of *salvation*, 1 Thess. 5. 8. and the head-piece may be some-way called the head; so, *hope*, which keepeth (to say so) grace's head, may not unfitly be called the head, seeing without it the head will be at least without its helmet; and, taking it so, for this special piece of the believer's armour, it follows well on watchfulness: however, it is certain, that hope bears up the believer under difficulties, Rom. 8. 24. and that it rests on Christ, who therefore is called our hope; and so, co-relatively being considered, as acting on him, it may get the name of head, as faith is upon the like account called our righteousness, and thus our Head is Christ hoped upon. And the commendation, that it is like *crimson*, will suit well with this interpretation, the red or crimson colour having a special reference to Christ's death and sufferings, which puts the right colour on our hope, and makes it of this dye, that it is never *ashamed* nor *fained*, Rom. 5. 3. *Obs.* 1. The exercising of hope is a necessary piece of a believer's beauty: and, as to have the heart sustained and comforted in the hope of what is not seen, is both necessary and profitable; so, when, by the power of hope, a believer's head is helpt up, and kept above in all waters, that he sink not, it is his singular ornament. 2. Hardly will a believer be in good case without this grace of hope; and when other graces are lively, hope will be so also: these pieces of armour, and spiritual decoring, go together. 3. There is no other in the world that hath a well grounded hope but the believer; it is only the believer, whose head is like *crimson*: all others, their hope makes ashamed, and their confidence shall be rooted out; whileas, his will be always fresh and green.

The

The tenth and last particular, here commended in the Bride, is her *hair*. This was spoken of, chap. 4. 1. but here, both the word in the original, and the commendation that is given of it, do differ from that which is there recorded: The word, here translated *hair*, is not elsewhere to be found; it comes from a root that gives ground to expound it *smallness*, or *tenderness*; therefore, it is taken by some, to signify a pin, or some of the small decorations of the head: And it is compared to *purple*, for its preciousness, loveliness, and other reasons formerly mentioned in speaking of that colour.

We take the scope here to be, to shew the universal loveliness and preciousness of grace in a believer, even in the least things; *What shall I say (saith he) that thy feet, navel, eyes and head, are beautiful? even thy hair, or the pins that dress it, are lovely and excellent; so glorious, princely and stately, a creature is this Bride, that there is not a wrong pin or hair to be found upon her:* And thus, all the commendation is well closed with this. By the *hair* then, we conceive, is understood, even the meanest gestures and circumstances of a believer's walk, which, being ordered by grace, are beautiful, and serve much to the adorning of the gospel.

*Observ.* 1. That grace makes an observable change upon the whole man; it regulates even the least things; it orders looks, gestures and circumstances, wherein often men take too much liberty. 2. Grace, vented in the meanest piece of a christian-carriage, is very beautiful; it puts a special beauty and lustre upon the meanest circumstances of the Christian's actions: Or, when a believer squares all his walk, even in the least things, by the right rule, it makes his way exceeding lovely; whereas, often a little folly, or unwatchfulness in such, proves like a *dead fly, that makes a whole box of ointment to stink*, Eccles. 10. 1. 3. Our Lord takes notice of the smallest things in a believer, even of the *hair*, yea, of the smallest thereof: there is nothing in his people so mean, but he takes notice of it; and there is nothing so little, but grace should be exercised therein. In a word, all things in a believer should be suitable, *eyes, hair, head, &c.*

The particulars of the Bride's commendation, of which we have spoken (if they were understood) certainly they contain much; but, as if these were little, he proceeds in expressing this beauty of, or rather his love to, his Bride, in three wonderful expressions, as proofs of what he hath said concerning her loveliness and beauty, or (if we may improperly so call them) aggravations thereof, whereby that commendation is raised and heightened to an exceeding great height. The first is in the end of the fifth verse, and it is this, *The King is held (or bound) in the galleries*: The sense in a word is, *What ravishing loveliness is this that is to be found in this Bride, that the King is thereby (as it were) held and bound, and must stand to look upon it, he is so de-*

*lighted with it?* 1<sup>st</sup>, This *King* is our Lord Jesus, the Prince of the kings of the earth: He is not only here, but elsewhere, often stiled the *King*, because he is eminently so; and it is much to the believer's consolation that he is so, if the faith of it were fixed in them. Our Lord is a most royal-kingly person. 2<sup>dly</sup>, The *galleries*, here, are the same that were, *chap. 1. 17.* called *there-rafters*; the word there is our *galleries*: Galleries are places where great men use to walk; and here (Christ and the believer having one house, wherein they dwell together) the galleries signifie the means or ordinances, wherein in a more special way they come to walk together. 3<sup>dly</sup>, To be *held* (or *bound*, as the word is) signifies a holy constraint that was on him, that he could do no otherwife, because he would do no otherwife, it was so delight-som to him; as, *chap. 3. 4.* and *4. 9.* and *6. 5, 12.* where, on the matter, the same thing is to be found. The word, here used, is borrowed from the nature of affection amongst men, that detains them to look on what they love: In sum, this in an abrupt manner comes-in on the close of the particulars of the Bride's commendation; as if it were said, *So lovely art thou, that Christ, as captivate or overcome, cannot withdraw, but is held* (as, *chap. 3. 4.*) *to look upon thy beauty*: Which is the more wonderful, that he is so royal a Person, whom enemies, death and devils could not detain, yet he is so prevailed over by a believer. And it is observable, that there is not one thing oftner mentioned in this Song, than the wonderful expressions of Christ's yielding himself to be prevailed over by them; as if his might were to be employed for them, rather than for himself; and as if he gloried in this, that he is overcome by them, which is indeed the glory of his grace. *Obs. 1.* There are some more than ordinary admissions to nearness with Christ, that believers may meet with; which are more than ordinary for clearness, so as they may be said to have him in the *galleries*; and also for continuance, so as they may be said to have him *held* there. 2. Christ Jesus by the holy violence of his people's graces (so to speak) may be held and captivate to stay and make his abode with them: it is good then to wrestle with Christ, that he may be held and prevailed with. 3. Holiness, in a believer's walk, hath much influence on the attaining and entertaining of the most sensible manifestations of Christ: Thus he is *held in the galleries*. 4. Our Lord Jesus thinks no shame to be out of love prevailed over by his people; yea, he esteems it his honour, therefore is this so often recorded for the commendation of his love, and the comfort of believers.

Verse 6. *How fair, and how pleasant art thou, O Love, for delights!*

This verse contains the second expression, whereby the Bride's commendation is heightened, in three things, *First*, By the title he gives her, *O Love, for delights!* He calls her, in the abstract, *Love* it self: there can be no more said; she is not only lovely, but *Love* it self: *for delights* is added as the reason of it, because of the various and abounding delights that are to be found in her; she is (to say so) a person so excellently beautiful, and hath so many lovely things in her. The *second* thing is the commendation he joins with this title, and it is in two words, 1. She is *fair*: This looks to the external loveliness of her person. 2. She is *pleasant*: This respects the sweetness and amiableness of her inward disposition. These two may be separate in others, but they meet in the believer, as they do in Christ; therefore she had given him these two epithets, *chap. 1. 16.* The *third* thing is the manner of expression, which heightens all this: It is expressed with an *How? How fair? &c.* (as *chap. 4. 10.*) shewing an incomparableness and an inexpressibleness to be in her beauty; whereby, in sum, the love of this blessed Bridegroom shews his satisfaction in his Bride, by multiplying such wonderful expressions, as hold forth the high esteem that he hath of her. *Obs. 1.* There is nothing so lovely, in all the world, as grace in a believer; the most delightfom pleasant thing in the world is nothing to this. 2. The love that Christ hath to his people is inexpressible: Altho' he useth many significant ways to express it, yet must it close with an indefinite expression and question, to which an answer cannot be made, *How fair?* It cannot be told how fair, and men cannot take it up otherwise than by wondring at it. 3. This loveliness of the Bride, and the King's being kept in the galleries, or the sense of the enjoyment of his presence, go together; and therefore it is subjoined here, as the cause of the former, like one that is ravished with the admiration of some excellent sight, he stays and beholds it, and O (saith he) how pleasant is it! The believer is the uptaking object of the love of Christ, wherein he delights. 4. There is no lovely nor delightfom thing in all the world, that Christ cares for, or esteems of, as he doth of the believer; grace makes a person Christ's *Love for delights*: Riches, honour, favour, parts, will be of no value without this; whereas one without these may with this have Christ's affection ingaged to them.

Verse 7. *This thy stature is like to a palm-tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.*

Verse 8. *I said, I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the*

*the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples.*

**Verse 9.** *And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine, for my Beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep, to speak.*

The former two expressions, *verse 5, 6.* have fallen from him (to speak so) in a ravished, abrupt manner, by way of exclamation. The third way, how he amplifies the commendation of the Bride, follows, *verse 7, 8, 9.* (as subjoined to the preceeding particular description) And this amplification is expressed these three ways, *1st.* By commending her stature, as the result of all her parts (formerly described) put together, with a repetition of one of these parts mainly taken notice of, *verse 7.* *2dly.* By shewing his resolution to haunt her company, by which his respect to her appears, *verse 8.* *3dly.* By promising gracious effects to follow on his performing the former promise, of his keeping company with her, *verse 8, 9.*

The 7th verse then speaks to two things, her stature and her breasts. Her stature respects all the bygone parts being now put together, for so they represent the whole stature: And by stature is understood the proportionableness and comeliness that is in the whole, being considered as jointly united in one body, as well as severally (as was said of him, *chap. 5, 16.*) and the relative, *this,* clears it; *this,* that is, *this* which is made up of all the several parts I have been enumerating, they being put together, make thy stature; and thy stature, thus made up of these members and parts, is like the palm-tree: And so, from this similitude, her stature is commended. The palm-tree is recorded in scripture to have divers commendable properties, *1st.* It is straight; therefore it is said of the idols, that they are upright like the palm-tree, *Jer. 5. 10.* Straightness is comely in a stature; He was like to a cedar, *chap. 5. 15.* she is like to a palm-tree here. *2dly.* A palm-tree hath good fruits, the dais are the fruit thereof. *3dly.* It is a tree of long continuance, and keeps long green; hence, *Psal. 92. 12, 14.* it is said of the righteous, *They shall flourish like the palm-tree; therefore, Joel 1. 12.* it is an evidence of great drought, when the palm-tree withereth. *4thly.* They were looked on as most fit to be used in times when men were about to express their joy in the most solemn manner; and, so when Christ is coming triumphantly to Jerusalem, *Joh. 12.* they cut down branches of palm-trees, to carry before him; and, *Rev. 7. 4.* these victors have palms in their hands; and, in *Levit. 23. 40.* we find branches of these trees commanded to be made use of in the joyful feast of tabernacles; and the seventy palm-trees, that were found by the Israelites at Elim, are mentioned,

oned, *Numb.* 33. 9. as refreshful; so is the city of palm-trees also mentioned as a most pleasant place, *Deut.* 34. 3. All these may be applied to believers, who, both by the change that is wrought upon them by the grace of Christ, and also, as they are in him by faith, are such. They are straight, not crooked, but beautiful and flourishing, and to him refreshful, as the next verse shews, being the living signs and monuments of his victory over death and the devil. *Obj.* 1. There ought not only to be in a believer, a thriving of graces distinctly, but a right joining, ordering and compacting of them together, that they may keep a proportionableness, and make up complexly a lovely stature: that is, not only should all graces be kept in exercise together, but as members of one new man, each ought to be subservient to another, for making up of a sweet harmony in the result; love should not wrong zeal, nor zeal prudence; but every grace, as being a distinct member of the new man, should be settled in its own place, to make the stature lovely. 2. When this proportion is kept, and every grace hath its own place, it is exceeding lovely, like a beautiful stature; whereas grace, when acting unorderly (if then it may be called grace) is like an eye, beautiful in it self; but, not being in the right place of the face, doth make the stature unlovely and disproportionable. It is not the least part of spiritual beauty, when not only one hath all graces, but hath every one of them acting according to their several natures, even when they are acting jointly together. 3. This furthers much believers fruitfulness, and continues them fresh and green, when the whole stature of grace is right, and kept in a due proportionableness.

The particular that is again repeated, is her *breasts*, which are compared to a cluster of grapes, or wine, as it is in the eighth verse. We conceive, by *breasts* here, is signified her love and affection, whereby he is entertained: So, *chap.* 1. 13. *He shall ly all night between my breasts*; and so it agreeth well with that expression, *Prov.* 5. 19. *Let her breasts satisfy thee at all times, and be thou always ravish'd with her love*: This is confirmed from the similitude unto which it is compared, and that is, *grapes, or wine*; shewing, that her love is refreshful, and cordial (to speak so) to him: Thy breasts (saith he) that is, to ly between thy breasts, and to be kindly entertained by thee, is more than wine to me: And this is the same thing which was said, *chap.* 4. 10. *How much better is thy love than wine?* And the similitude being the same, we think the thing is the same that is thereby set forth and commended; and it is singularly taken notice of by Christ through all the Song, and marked in *chap.* 4. and here, as that which makes all her stature so lovely in it self: Love makes every grace act (therefore is it the fulfilling of the law) and makes grace in its actings beautiful and lovely to him. These words, then, may either express, 1. The loveliness of her love: Or, 2. The delight which he took in it, as esteeming highly.

highly of it; she was so very lovely, that nothing refreshed him so much as her breasts: Which expression (as all the rest) holds out intense spiritual love, under the expressions that are usual amongst men. And it says, *1st*, That the beauty of grace is a ravishing beauty; or, Christ's love delights in the love of his people: A room in their hearts is much prized by him. *2dly*, Christ hath a complacency and acquiescence in his people, which he hath in none other; and where more grace is, there his complacency (though one in it self) doth the more manifest it self. *3dly*, When a believer is right and in good case, then his love to Christ is warm: And particularly, a right frame is by nothing sooner evidenced, than by the affections; and it is ordinarily ill or well with us, as our love to Christ is vigorous or cold.

The second way, how our Lord expresseth his love to his Bride, is in the beginning of *verse 8.* and it is by expressing of his resolution to accompany with her, beyond any in the world. She was compared to a palm-tree in the former verse, Now (saith he) *I will go up to the palm-tree* (that is, to the palm-tree before mentioned) it is on the matter the same with that promise, *chap. 4. 6. I will get me to the mountain of myrrhe, &c.* Consider here, *First*, The thing promised or proposed, and that is, *his going up to the palm-tree, and taking hold of the boughs thereof*: That the scope is to hold forth his purpose of manifesting himself to her, is clear, *1.* By the dependence of this on the former: he had said, *Thou art a palm-tree*; and now (saith he) *I will go up to the palm-tree*, which speaks his prizing that tree above all others. *2.* The effects also of his going up, in the following words, do clear it: It is such a going up as hath refreshful and comfortable influence upon her. The importance of the similitude is, as men love the trees they converse much about (and, it is like, palm-trees were much used for that end) or, as climbing up upon trees, and taking hold of their boughs, do shew the delight and pleasure men have in such or such a tree, and how refreshing it is to them to be near it; So, having compared her to a palm-tree, he expresseth his delight in her, and his purpose of manifesting himself to her, under the same similitude, as is ordinary in the strain of this Song. *Secondly*, Consider, that this resolution is laid down, as no passing thought, but is a deliberate and determined resolution, *I said I will go, &c. I will take hold, &c.* Which doth shew, (1.) Christ's inward thoughts and conclusions with himself, this is his heart-language. (2.) The expression of these; and so the words come to be a promise, which the believer may make use of, as of a thing which Christ hath said. (3.) It shews a deliberateness in both, that they were not sudden, but the advised result of a former deliberation, and that of old, *I said it*: In a word (saith he) *my Bride is my choice in all the world, the tree that I have resolved, for my delight, to climb up upon, beside all others.* *Obs.* *1st*, The scope and result of all Christ's commendations of his Bride, is, that

that she may be brought to look for, and expect to be made happy with his own company, and to be unspeakably made up in the enjoyment of his presence. 2dly, It is not every one that hath the promise of Christ's company and fellowship, or that may expect it; it is the believer only who may look for it, he hath Christ's word for it, and none but he. 3dly, Christ's most passionate expressions of love are not from any surprize of affection in him, but are deliberately resolved, and that of old, so that now they cannot be altered; his delight was in the habitable parts of the earth, and his resolution was laid down to go up to the palm-tree, before it was. 4thly, Christ's thoughts to his people (if known) would be found to be precious, thoughts of peace, and not of evil; many a good purpose hath been in his heart of old, and there is no greater evidence of love, neither can be, than to intimate and accomplish these, as he doth here: *I laid down this resolution (saith he) long ere now, and I will follow it out.* 5thly, A holy tender walk in believers (which is indeed to have the stature lovely as the palm-tree) will obtain the manifestation of Christ's heart to them; and there is no greater evidence of Christ's respect, than that, *John 14. 21, 23.*

The third way, how he expresseth his love, is by the effects, which he promiseth shall follow on his presence with her, as his presence is subjoined to her lovely stature (which connexion is observable). The effects, that follow, are three: the first two are in the second part of the eighth verse, and the first of them in these words, *Now also thy breasts shall be as the clusters of the vine*; this is the first fruit of his going up to the palm-tree, which (as also the rest of them) may be taken as comprehensive of these two, 1st, Of some gracious effect that shall be wrought in the Bride, and so these words bring him in speaking to this purpose, *When I come to thee, then by my presence thy graces shall flow, and thou shalt be in a capacity to edify others, and to satisfy me, as if thy breasts were clusters of the vine, to furnish what might be refreshful*: Thus he comforts her, from what should be wrought in her, by his presence with her. And the scope and connexion shews, that this cannot be excluded, it being a native consequence of his presence, and comfortable in it self to her. 2dly, They are to be looked upon as comprehensive of his gracious acceptance of her and her fruits, as being well satisfied with her; and thus the meaning of these words, *thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine*, is this, *When I shall come to thee, thy love and company, thy bosom (to say so) shall be to me more refreshful than clusters of the vine; I will feed upon it, and delight in it, as, chap. 4. 10.* This compleats her consolation, and the evidence of his love, that he undertakes it shall be well with her inward condition, and that he shall accept of her also, and be well satisfied with her: These are not only consistent together, but do necessarily concur for making up the scope, which is to

dence his love, and to comfort her; and the one of these follows on the other, therefore we comprehend both in all these effects. *Obs.* 1. Christ's presence hath much influence on believers liveliness; their *breasts* run when he is present. 2. Liveliness is a singular and comfortable mercy in a believer's estimation; therefore is it promised as a thing that is in a special way comfortable to her. 3. Christ's presence, or nearness with him, and fruitfulness, go together: and where the breasts are not as clusters, no condition the believer can be in, is to be accounted presence.

The second effect is in these words, *And the smell of thy nose like apples*: Apples are savoury fruit; the smell of the nose is the savour of the breath, that comes from it, which in unwholsom bodies is unsavoury; saith he to the Bride, *Thine shall not be so, but thy constitution shall be lively, and all that comes from thee shall be savoury, and so shall be accepted of me; it shall be savoury in it self, as apples are to the smell, and it shall be delighted in by me, as having a sweet air and breath with it.* This imports a conspicuous inward change, by the growth of mortification, whereby believers being purified within from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, there proceeds nothing from them but what is savoury; whereas a loose and ragged conversation, as corrupt breath (*Job* 17. 1.) evidenceth much inward rottenness. *Obs.* 1. Christ's presence is of an healing, cleansing vertue, and makes an observable inward change. 2. An inward change evidenceth it self in the outward fruits and effects; the very smell and savour of the conversation, and of all external duties, is changed. 3. This inward purity is very desirable to the believer; for, so it is here a piece of his comfort, to have a promise that the smell of his nose shall be as apples; and it is a special evidence of Christ's respect, to have that performed.

It may also take in the favouriness of the believer's breathing, in respect of themselves; when Christ is present, they shall draw in a wholsom, pleasant and refreshful air; whereas, now ordinarily, we breathe in a corrupt air. *It shall not be so then, saith he, the smell of thy nose shall be as if thou did savour of apples.* Christ's company makes all both fruitful within, and refreshful to the believer, and also makes all duties, and all dispensations he is exercised with, savoury and acceptable to himself; all which follows on Christ's presence, and suits with the scope, that saith, *both taste and smell are satisfied.*

The third lovely effect of Christ's presence, is in the ninth verse: And, 1. The effect it self is set down; then its commendation is amplified. The effect, or advantage of Christ's presence, is in these words, *The roof of thy mouth* (or thy palat) *shall be as the best wine*: The palat, or roof of thy mouth, is the instrument of taste, and so is sometimes taken for the taste it self, and is so translated, *chap.* 2. 3. *his fruit was sweet to my taste*: So, *Job* 34. 3. Or, by palat may be understood the mouth; as, *chap.* 5. 16. Next, it is compared

to

to wine, yea, the best wine (the reasons of the comparison have been often spoken to). The best wine is that which is most refreshing and exhilarating: Now this wine is three ways set out in its excellency (for, that the following expressions are to this purpose, is clear) 1<sup>st</sup>, It is *for my Beloved*, that is, such wine as he allows his friends, whom he styles *beloved*, chap. 5. 1. (and this shews what kind of wine is understood) and so it must be excellent wine, being that which is allowed on Christ's special friends. Or, it is an abrupt expression, whereby he speaks in name of the Bride; it is such wine as I (as if she were speaking) allow on thee, my Beloved, and which I reserve only for thee: For which reason, she is called, *a fountain sealed*, and *garden inclosed*, as being set apart for him, and not common to others; and thus is he expressing, in her name, what she expresseth her self in the last words of this chapter, it is *all for thee my Beloved*: And it implieth both a commendation of its sweetness, and her devoting of it to him. However, the words hold forth something that proves it to be excellent, and not common, but such as is found amongst these who stand in this spiritual relation. 2<sup>dly</sup>, It is commended from this, that it *goeth down sweetly*, that is, it is pleasant to the taste, and is not harsh, but delightfully may be drunk of: Or, it may respect that property of good wine, mentioned, *Prov. 23. 31.* (that it *moves it self rightly*) if the words be translated as the margin imports. 3<sup>dly</sup>, It is commended from the effects, it drinks sweetly; and when it is drunk, *it causeth the lips of those that are asleep to speak*: Wine is cordial and refreshful, but this wine must be in a singular way refreshful, that makes men that are infirm, or old (as the word may be rendered) and almost dead, to revive and speak; or, those that were secure (as the Bride was, chap. 5. 2.) and in a spiritual drowsiness, it can quicken them, and make them cheerfully speak: Thus the wine is commended. Now, we conceive, by this comfortable effect, that is promised to her upon Christ's coming to her, these two things are here holden forth,

*First*, How refreshing it shall be to her self, all her senses shall be taken with it, both the smell and the taste; it shall be singularly sweet to her spiritual taste, as it is, chap. 2. 3. And thus the wine of the Spirit is commended, which accompanies his manifestations, and is reserved for his Beloved, chap. 5. 1. and is a joy that no stranger is made partaker of: This wine is indeed peculiar for his Beloved (and is suitable to himself) and is the wine that goeth sweetly down; and is most refreshful, and makes secure sinners to speak, and those that are faint it revives them; as, *Eph. 5. 18. Be not filled with wine, &c. but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to your selves in psalms, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.* This effect agrees well to the Spirit, yea, only to this wine of the Spirit; and it suits well the scope, which is to shew what comfortable influence Christ's presence should have on her, so that when

he comes to his palm-tree, her taste shall relish as with the best wine; his presence shall thus revive and quicken her, and be a special evidence of his singular respect to her.

*Secondly*, It holds out (which follows on the former) that not only her breath shall savour well to him and others, and her inward senses abound with refreshings to her self, but also the expressions of her mouth to others shall be savory, and to him refreshful, as a delightful fruit flowing from her. Thus (saith he) *when I betake me to fellowship with thee, and come near by sensible embracements, to take hold of thy boughs* (as a man embracing one whom he loves, for thus the allegory is spiritually to be understood) *thou shalt be to me, and in my esteem, exceeding lovely; thy breasts, smell and mouth will be cheering and savory, like grapes, apples, and the best wine.* And here spiritual affections and holy reason would be made use of, to gather the life of Christ's love from the effects of it, with some resemblance of what useth to be betwixt man and wife, in their mutual loving carriage (for so runs the strain of this Song) altho' our carnalness makes it hazardous and unsafe to descend in the explication of these similitudes: And thus, as chap. 5. 16. by his mouth or palate, was understood the kisses thereof, or the most sensible manifestations of his love to her; so here, by her palate or mouth, is understood her most affectionate soul-longings of love to him, which, being warmed and melted by his presence, doth manifest it self in a kindly way, in spiritual embraces and kisses (as from ver. 11, 12. will be clear) which are exceedingly delightful to him: And so the sense of this promise is, *When I come to thee, then, yea, even now, thy love with the sense of mine shall be warmed and refreshed; so that it shall in an affectionate way vent it self on me, and that shall be as the most exhilarating cordial unto me, as the manifestations of my love will be cheering and refreshing unto thee.* Both which are notably comfortable to her, and special evidences of his respect, which is the scope. *Obs.* 1. There are some secret flowings of love, and soul-experiences betwixt Christ and believers, that are not easily understood; and that makes the expressions of this love so seemingly intricate. 2. These flowings of love that are betwixt Christ and his people (how strange soever they be) are most delightful to the soul that partakes of them, they are as *wine that goeth down sweetly.* 3. Christ's presence hath many benefits and advantages waiting on it, which contribute exceedingly both to the quickning and comforting of the believer; many things hang on this one, *his going up to the palm-tree.* 4. The joy of the Spirit hath notable effects, and can put words in the mouth of these that never spoke much before, yea, can make the dumb to sing, with a sensible warming of the heart and inward affections, stirring up melody in their souls, which yet will be distinct in the impressions and effects of it. 5. Our Lord Jesus hath designed the comfort of the believer,

which

which he holdeth out in comfortable promises, and alloweth them to make use of it, and it is pleasant and delightfom to him to have them so doing.

## B R I D E.

Verse 10. *I am my Beloved's, and his desire is towards me.*

The Bride hath been long silent, delightfomly drinking in what she hath been hearing from the Bridegroom's sweet mouth, and so suffering him to say on: Now in this tenth verse, and these that follow, she comes in speaking, and having well observed what he said, the result and effect thereof upon her heart doth appear in what she saith. And, 1. she comforts her self in her union with him, as now being clear in it from his owning of her; and she lays down, and begin with this conclusion, *verse 10.* Now (saith she) I may say, *I am my Beloved's*, &c. Then, 2. looking to his promise, *verse 8.* she puts up her great desire after communion with him, that, according to her interest in him, she might be admitted to enjoy him; which suit is put up, qualified or enlarged, and by several arguments pressed on him, *vers. 11, 12, 13.*

The conclusion which she gathers, *verse 10.* from his discourse, comes not in altogether abruptly, but is the expression of a heart comforted with the intimations of Christ's love, and wakned with the wine that makes them that are asleep to speak; and so breathing out the great ground of her consolation. Now (saith she) seeing he loves me, and out of the infinite freedom of his grace is pleased to commend unworthy me so much, certainly, I may conclude, *I am my Beloved's, and his desire is towards me.* The first part of this verse, wherein she asserts her interest in him, was spoken to, *chap. 2. 16. and 6. 3.* and it is now repeated on this occasion, for these reasons, (1.) Because it is the great compend of all her consolation, and that wherein it consists, that she is Christ's and Christ is hers: This is indeed matter of solid consolation, and whatever is comfortable doth flow from it. (2.) To shew that she kept the clearness of her interest in him, in some measure constantly, and carried it along with her in the several parts of her exercise; she can assert it this day, and the next day, and the third day. (3.) It is now a full tide with her, as to Christ's manifestations, and the flowings of his Spirit; he hath been liberal and large in the intimations of his love, and she makes this use of it, to put her interest in him out of question, while the evidences of it are so legible. *Obs.* 1. Believers may, at some times, more clearly and distinctly gather and conclude their interest in Christ, than at other times. 2. When believers are admitted to nearness with Christ, and clouds that would darken their faith are scattered, then they would endeavour to fix their confidence, and put their interest out of question; that when their sun comes under a cloud, and

and they see not to read their evidences so distinctly, they be not put to question their interest, and all bypast experiences, as delusions. 3. When the Lord owns his people, and speaks comfortably to them (as he hath been doing to the Bride) then they should own him, and acquiesce in that consolation allowed upon them by him.

The last part of the verse, in these words, *and his desire is towards me*, shews not only that the interest was mutual, and that he loved her, as she did him; but that he loved her affectionately, so that in a manner he could not be without her, *His desire was to her*. 2. That he condescended to love her with such a kind of love and respect as a woman hath to her husband; for, so this is spoken of the first woman, *Gen. 3. thy desire shall be towards him*, that is, subordinate to his, or seeking to conform to his, that she may please him: And so here it shews Christ's great condescending, to have the believer carving (as it were) to him, so ready is he to please and satisfy his people, for their good. 3. It shews a deal of satisfaction that she had in this; it was the matter of her humble spiritual boasting, that Christ so loved her, hate or condemn her who would. 4. She thinks still much of this privilege of an interest in Christ, and esteems nothing the less of it, that she had attained clearness in it before now: Clearness is ever of much worth, and these who are clearest anent this, will esteem most of it: That holy faintness (to say so) that this word, *My Beloved is mine*, brings in to the soul, easeth and comforteth the more that it is often renewed.

Verse 11. *Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field, let us lodge in the villages.*

Verse 12. *Let us get up early to the vineyards, let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.*

Verse 13. *The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my Beloved!*

When she hath laid down this ground of her interest in him, she proceeds to improve it, *verse 11.* by giving him a kindly and familiar invitation, which she, first, qualifies in the end of the 11th verse, and beginning of the 12th; and then, in what followeth, adds some motives to press it. The similitude of a loving wife's carriage to a kind husband, is continued, as if such a loving wife

wife, desirous of her husband's company, did invite him to the fields, thereby in a retired way to be solaced with his company; especially by going abroad with him in a pleasant spring-time, and staying some nights in villages for that end, and that they might the more seriously and comfortably view the state of their orchards and gardens, which is both pleasant, profitable and delightsom, to be done in the husband's company: even so doth the Bride follow the similitude, to shew what she desired from Christ in desiring of his company, and for what end, to wit, both for the profit and comfort she expected to reap thereby.

The invitation she gives him, is, *Come, my Beloved: Come*, is a word much used betwixt Christ and the believer, and is a kindly word. He saith, *Come*, chap. 2. 10. and now she useth the same word; Her putting up this desire, expresseth a desire of communion and nearness with him, and also much affection, and is the language both of the Spirit and the Bride, who saith, *Come*, Rev. 22. 17. Here it imports a petition, pressing for a greater degree of communion, which, by comparing this with the former words, may be gathered; for, she possessed it in a good measure for the time, and yet here she saith, *Come*. First, considering this invitation in it self, we may observe, That communion with Christ is the one, principal and common-suit of the believer, wherein he is never satisfied till it be perfected. Next, comparing these words with the preceeding, *Observe*, 1. The more that Christ be manifested to his people, the more near they be admitted to him, and the better that their frame be, and the more clear they be anent their interest in him, the greater will their desire be of more near communion with him. 2. Clearness of interest in him, when it is solid, is a ground to press for his fellowship; and still it presseth the person who hath it, to pursue after more full manifestations of Christ. Again, considering these words, as they respect his promise, *verse 8. I said* (saith he) *I will go up to the palm-tree, &c.* now she having heard it, layeth hold on this promise, and is not long in saying, *Come*. *Obs.* 1<sup>st</sup>, That believers should improve the promises they have, for attaining what is promised in them, and should not suffer promises to ly by them not made use of. 2<sup>dly</sup>, What is promised to a believer, may, and should be prayed for, by them. 3<sup>dly</sup>, Believers, in their prayers and suits to Christ, would have a special respect to the promises, not only to conform their desires to them, but to ground them upon them. 4<sup>thly</sup>, The more tender believers be in their frame, they will the more carefully gather up all Christ's words and promises, and strengthen their faith thereby in their dealing with him.

Next, she contents not her self to put up this suit, but she further qualifies it, in several repeated petitions (whereby the ardency of her desire, and the

the strength of her faith doth appear) all which are recorded, both as a pattern to teach believers how they should carry in prayer, and also as evidences what will be their way and manner in that duty, when their spirit is in a good condition. The first qualification of the former petition is, *Let us go forth into the field.* *Going forth into the field*, holds forth these two, (1.) The extent of her desire; she would have him at home and abroad also, she desires not to go out of doors without him. (2.) A desire of retiredness with him, that she might be alone in his company, as a wife going abroad to fields alone with her husband; as, *Gen. 24. 63.* it is said, that *Isaac went out to the fields to pray*, that is, that he might be the more retired in that duty. *Observe*, 1. That where desire of fellowship with Christ is right, it breathes after a walk with him every-where, at home and abroad; they cannot endure to go out at doors, or to the fields, without him. 2. Delight in Christ's company seeks to be retired with him; to be alone with him, to be freed from all other companies, and abstracted from all distraction, the more freely to be solaced with him.

Again, the pronoun, *us*, *Let us go*, is not without good purpose added: It is not, *Go thou*, nor, *I will go*; but, *Let us go*, as bearing in it a double motive, and evidence of her affection; 1<sup>st</sup>, That she offers her self to bear him company. *Observe*, When Christ's company is loved and respected, the soul will be content to leave all others, and go with him, for the entertaining of it. 2<sup>dly</sup>, It implies, that tho' she had an errand, and desire to be abroad, yet, she could not endure to go about it without him; therefore (saith she) *Let us go.* *Obs.* 1. The fields, and most pleasant recreations, are heartless and wearisome without Christ's company, in the believer's esteem. 2. His company is the believer's great encouragement to undertake any thing, and that which makes his out-going and in-coming pleasant: she is content to go with him, and cannot abide to go without him. *Lastly*, It shews her respecting that which was her part in the exercise, as well as his, and her resolution to conform her practice to her prayers; for, as she desires him to go, so she is willing to go her self: If we would expect the answer of prayer, our practices should be like our prayers.

The second qualification is, *Let us lodge in the villages.* *Villages* are rural, or landward places, by that name distinguished from towns or cities; in these, men travelling, or continuing a time in the fields for their recreation or business, do lodge, as retired from their ordinary vocations in cities. Her desire, *Let us lodge in these* (or, as the word is, *Let us night or dwell there*) shews that she desired him abroad with her, not for a piece of a day, to return at night, but for a greater length and continuance of time, as loving rather to lodge with him in the villages, and to take what might be had in his com-

company, for lengthning their retirement, than to return hastily to the city, or businesses whereby she might be distracted, and in hazard of an interruption of her communion with him. *Obs.* 1. True desire of communion with Christ in the enjoyment of his presence, as it presseth for retiredness with him, so is it desirous to have that lengthned, and cannot endure to think of parting with him, when it gets him in a corner. 2. A back-side, or a corner alone with Christ's company, is good lodging to a lover of Christ: Solitariness, with his presence, is more frequented and delighted in by such, than more publick fellowship and societies.

In the 12th verse we have some more qualifications of her petition, and some of the motives that press her to seek after Christ's company. The third qualification is in these words, *Let us go up early to the vineyards*: The similitude is continued, but this word *early* is added; and it implies (as it is used in scripture) 1st, Timousness; so the women came to Christ's grave *early*, Luke 24. 1. *while it was dark*. 2dly, Seasonableness; so it is taken in that expression, *the Lord will help, and that right early*, Psal. 46. 5. 3dly, Seriousness; so, *Hos. 5. 15. they shall seek me early*, that is, seriously. Here it implieth, that she, as one impatient of delays, desires to go with expedition, and for that end offers him her company. *Obs.* 1. Sincere desire of fellowship with Christ cannot endure delays, but would presently be at enjoyment. 2. There is a season or earliness, a fit opportunity of keeping company with Christ, and that would not be neglected. 3. As privacy is a great friend to communion with Christ, so is earliness and timousness in setting to it: The more early one begin, they may expect to speed the better. 4. As no duty would be put off or delayed, so especially this great and concerning-duty, of endeavouring for fellowship with Christ, would by no means be delayed or shifted, but early and timously would be gone about.

The fourth qualification follows in the motives, that she *might see how the several fruits budded*: And it shews, that she desired not his company only for her satisfaction, but for her profit also, that thereby she might be helped to thrive in her spiritual condition, and might be enabled the better to do her duty. *Obs.* A sincere and right desire of communion with Christ, studieth to improve it for spiritual advantage, when it is attained. So then, all these put together, shew, that she desires Christ's presence retiredly, constantly, timously, and in order to her spiritual advantage and profit: This last will appear more in the motives, especially the first. This is indeed a main desire; and therefore, in what follows, she presseth it with motives, which put her to it, and also (as being well pleasing to him) give her ground to expect it from him: And tho' she useth these motives, as if they were arguments to induce him to grant her desire, yet they are mainly for strengthening her own

faith in pressing her suit. The using of motives, and her thus qualifying of her desire, faith, That believers in their petitions would insist and press them; for, altho' Christ be not informed by words, nor perswaded by our arguments, yet this both helps to warm the affections, and strengthen the faith of the believer himself, and is becoming believers in their prayers to him, who calls for, and admits of reasonable service. The motives in particular are four. The first is taken from the end of her petition, which is to see how her graces prosper: The similitude continues, as a wife intending to visit her husbandry (to say so) is helped and encouraged therein by her husband's presence, and therefore desires his company; so the believer hath a husbandry, vineyards, grapes, pomegranates, and divers plants to oversee, which are the graces of the Spirit, and divers duties committed to him (as was said upon chap. 4. 12, 13. and 6. 11.) and his visiting of these, is the taking of a reflect view of himself, in an abstracted retired condition, that thereby he may be distinctly acquainted how it is with him, and with his graces: In following of which duty, Christ's presence in some secret corner is exceeding helpful; therefore, for that end doth the Bride seek it, and makes use of this motive to press it, because it is a duty of concernment to her to search her self: It is pleasing to him, and a thing that she would be at, yet cannot win to it in a common ordinary frame, it is so difficult; therefore doth she propose this (which is her end) as that which would be respected and well taken off her hand by him. *Obf.* 1. Believers have a task and husbandry committed to them to manage, that is, several duties and graces, holden forth under the similitude of vines, pomegranates, &c. which they are carefully to notice. 2. It is necessary, in the managing of this task, for a believer to be well acquainted with the condition of his graces, and it is his duty to be reflecting on himself for that end; and if men ought to look to the state of their flocks and herds, *Prov.* 27. 23. how much more ought they carefully to look to this? 3. This duty should be purposely, retiredly, and deliberately intended, undertaken and gone about, with a resolute design for attaining to the discovery of our own case, as she doth here. 4. This duty hath difficulties in it; and ordinarily the heart is not prevailed with to be kept serious about it, except the frame thereof be more tender than ordinary. 5. To a tender believer it will be a great favour to get this duty of self-examination profitably and unbyassedly discharged: It is a mercy worth the seeking from God; and the more tender believers be, they will be the more in this. 6. Altho' believers be clear as to their interest (as the Bride was, *verse* 10.) yet may they be indistinct as to the knowledge of their own condition, and therefore ought not to neglect this duty of self-examination; but, where clearness is solid, they will be the more careful in the searching of themselves. 7. Christ's presence, as it is a notable

notable help to all duties, so particularly it is in a special way helpful to believers in searching themselves, by making the heart willing and pliable, to follow it sweetly, by discovering things as they are, and by making the eye single, rightly to judge of every thing, and impartially to take with that which is discovered : Much presence would encourage the Lord's people to follow this duty, which otherwise is gone about in a heartless way. 8. It is a good use of Christ's presence and company, when it is improved for attaining of more through and distinct knowledge of our own condition ; and then especially believers would take the opportunity of putting themselves to trial. 9. A believer, when tender, will be particular in his search, he will search even to the least : he will not disapprove any thing of God's grace that is real, altho' it be weak and tender ; therefore she looks to *buds*, as well as more mature fruit, and acknowledgeth them, because Christ doth so, *chap. 6. 11.* 10. Believers promise not much in themselves, or, they expect not great things anent their own fruitfulness ; therefore, it is to see what is *budding* or appearing, rather than what is ripe, which she proposeth here to her self, as her design. 11. A tender believer will esteem much of little grace where it is real ; a *bud* is much to him, if it look fruit-like, as it is the evidence of Christ's Spirit in him, and the work of his grace : He that is humble will have a high esteem of it ; tho' he expect no great thing, nor yet thinks much of it, as it is inherent in him, yet he will not cast what is least, if solid. 12. The more tender one is, he will be the more desirous to search his own condition, as being unsatisfied with what he hath attained. Again, if we compare this with *chap. 6. 11.* where it is said, *he went down to his garden* for this very end for which she desires his presence, we may see, 1. A co-incidence betwixt Christ's work and the believer's (to say so) they have one task. 2. A going alongst both of their ends and ways to attain them ; he takes pains on his people by the means of his grace to make them fruitful, and they diligently haunt and improve the means for that same end. And, 3. Christ's words are near the same with hers, the more to strengthen her faith in obtaining what she sought, when it so concurred with his design : A believer, that aims at fruitfulness and tenderness by Christ's company in the means and ordinances, may expect to obtain his desire ; for, that same is his work, which he drives by the means of grace amongst his people.

The second motive, which makes her press for Christ's company in this retired way, is in these words, *there will I give thee my loves* ; that is, in short, As in retirements the Bridegroom and the Bride rejoice together, in the expressions of their mutual love, with more than ordinary familiarity ; So (saith she) *let me have thy company continued with me, that thereby my heart being warmed, I may get opportunity to let out my love in a lively manner on thee.* By loves

love simply is not meant, but love in the highest degree of it, manifesting it self in the most sensible manner, when the heart is melted as it were, and made free to pour out it self in love to him : It is therefore called *loves* in the plural number, to shew the many ways it will vent it self, as, in thoughts delightfully making the heart glad, in cheerful exulting in him, and affectionate imbracing him in its arms, feeding and delighting on him, and such like ways ; there is nothing kept up from him, and all doors, whereby love useth to vent, are opened. While she saith, *I will give thee my loves*, it is not to be understood, as if then she would begin to love him (for, the thing that made her put up this suit was her love to him) but that then she would with more freedom do it, and with ease and delight get it done, which now would not do for her (till his presence warmed her), at least in the manner she would be at. The word, *there*, that in the latter relates to the *fields, villages, &c.* is to be understood of that retirement in fellowship, which she desired with him ; in the scope, it looks to his secret manifesting of himself to her, in admitting of her to his bosom : *O !* (saith she) *come, my heart longs to be near thee ; and this advantage I expect from it, I would then get my heart drawn from idols, and, my affections ingaged to thee, which in thy absence I cannot get done so as I would : As a person cannot vent love so in company, as when he is alone in solitariness with his bosom-friend ; thus, Joseph being to manifest his love to his brethren, Gen. 45. 1. commanded all to go out, that so he might with the greatest freedom let forth his affections on them : And as Jonathan sent away his boy, when he was to embrace David in the fields, 1 Sam. 20. 40, &c. so here, the secret manifestations of Christ, by his Spirit to his people, being that which gives them liberty to let forth their hearts on him, especially in their unknown access to him, to which no man is witness, are, by this word, *there*, signified. *Obs. 1.* There are many more good things than one which accompanies Christ's presence ; and where love is in a believer's heart, there will be no scarcety of arguments to hold forth the advantage thereof. *2.* As there are some more than ordinary manifestations of love from Christ to his people, which are not constant ; so there are some more than ordinary flowings of the love of believers towards him : There are some times and cases, wherein especially the heart will melt in affection to him, and wherein it will be made to pour out it self with ease and delight upon him. *3.* It is no less the desire of believers to love Christ, and to have their affections flowing on him, than to have the manifestations of his love to them ; therefore speaks she of this, as of a benefit she exceedingly desired, to get leave to pour her heart out in love upon him. *4.* Believers, that love Christ, will not be satisfied with the degree of their own love, but will be desirous to have it more withdrawn from other things, and more fully venting on him. *5.* Altho' sometimes, yea, often-*

tentimes, the believer's heart comes not up that length in love to Christ that he would have it, yet he designs to set it on Christ alone; and there is none that willingly he gives it unto with consent but Christ, it is on him only he allows it. 6. There is no greater gift can be given to Christ, than his people's love; this is therefore the motive that is proposed by the Bride in her dealing with him, as holding forth the propine or entertainment which he should receive. 7. Christ's presence, and the manifestations of his love, conduceth notably unto, and hath great influence upon the gaining of our affections to him: it doth not only (as it were) give us the opportunity of his company, but it gains the heart, softens it, ravisheth it, and heightens the esteem of Christ in it (which no report of him can do so effectually as his own presence) and also it oileth all the affections, that they have a freedom to flow out (like the ice before the sun) which otherwise are key-cold. 8. Love to Christ loves solitariness and retirements with him; it is neither so stirred it self as when it is alone with him, nor are the men of the world able to bear or understand the intimate familiarity, that will be in the flowings of the love of Christ to a believer, or of a believer's liberty and holy boldness with Christ; nor were it meet, that they should be witnesses of the love-secrets that are betwixt him and them. 9. It is an evidence of single love to Christ, when his presence is longed for, that we may the more ardently and affectionately love him, and when all opportunities are sought for that may increase this; this is singleness and spiritualness in a great length, when this makes us glory in Christ's love to us, and desire the manifestations thereof, that we may have access thereby to love him. A believer will love heaven, because there he will have access fully to love Christ, as well as to be loved of him; and will abhor hell, not only because there are no intimations of Christ's love there, but also, because there is no access to love him there. To get the heart loving Christ, is indeed the believer's great delight, and in a manner his heaven. 10. Love in a believer to Christ, is the result or reflex of Christ's to him; it is that sun which begets this heat in the soul that loves him; and the more brightly he shine on believers, the more is their love hot towards him: For, *here is love, not that we loved him, but that he loved us first.* 11. It is an evidence of true love to Christ, and esteem of him, when the heart is longing, praying and using means that it may love him, and get its love to him heightened, till it be all bestowed on him allenarly.

In the thirteenth verse, we have the third and fourth motives; whereby the Bride presseth her suit. The third is, *The mandrakes give a smell, &c.* It is like that motive, which he useth in pressing her to hearken to his call, chap. 2. 12. *The flowers appear on the earth, &c.* The graces of the Spirit, growing up (as in a garden) in the believer's walk with Christ, are like flowers in the spring, which

which, by their pleasantness and savour, invite men to the fields. Thus the sense of this motive comes to this, All things (saith the Bride) are in a good condition, and there is a thriving amongst my graces, which are for pleasantness as flowers; therefore, *come*. This avowing of the flourishing of her graces, is not from any vain boasting, but in humble sincerity, acknowledging what she found in her self to his praise, and what she knew to be acceptable to him, as a confirmation to her faith, in the expectation of what she prayed for; for (which is a lesson we would learn) altho' the goodness of our condition can merit nothing which we pray for, yet it may give us confidence and boldness in prayer, when we have a good conscience and testimony within us, 1 John 3. 20. This fruitfulness of hers is four ways set forth, 1<sup>st</sup>, That these her fruits are ripe, and in their flower, *the mandrakes give a smell*: Mandrakes were much longed for by Rachel, Gen. 30. 14. and by their favouriness of taste there, and of smell here, it appears that they were some lovely fruit, and now in their prime most pleasant, because they give their smell. 2<sup>dly</sup>, Her fruitfulness is set forth in its comprehensiveness and variety, she is adorned *with all manner of pleasant fruits*; whereby is holden forth, that as believers have many divers graces, like variety of spices, chap. 4. 13, 14. which they should entertain, so all of them were in good case with her. 3. These fruits were *new and old*, whereby the plenty of the same kind is set forth, both (to say so) of this and the former year's growth; whereby is signified a thriving or increase of the believer's grace, there being a new degree of faith and love, &c. of this year, added to the former degree she attained before: she preserves the old, and she brings forth new; as, Matth. 13. 52. the scribe, taught in the kingdom of God, *brings out things new and old*; he hath the old stock, and the new increase, the talents that were given him, and five more gained by them. 4<sup>thly</sup>, These fruits are said to be *at our gates*; this looks most simply to signify this, That it is pleasant to have such fruits at the doors, and it betokens a frequency or plenty, and great abundance of them, when not only in the garden, but at the gates, they so abound; so this abounding of grace in a believer, makes (to say so) Christ's entry savoury and pleasant, and shews, that all things are in a good readiness for him, as the last motive (that *they are laid up for him*, even while they are at the gates) doth shew: In sum, *all things* (saith she) *are in readiness, and for thee only, my Beloved*; altho' not in perfection, yet in sincerity, provision is made for thy entertainment. Obs. 1. There are many various kinds of graces in a believer; and when it is right with one, or when one of them is thriving, it is ordinarily so with all. 2. Grace hath its growth, and should be increased by new additions, where it is begun; and when it goes well with the believer, there will be of these spiritual fruits, *both new and old*. 3. There is no keeping in good case of the old stock of grace, but by continuing

ing and growing in fruitfulness: where the old is preserved, there will be found new also; otherwise, what seemed once to blossom, becomes almost withered. 4. These, who are seriously desirous of Christ's company, should be making ready for him, by liveliness of all manner of graces, new and old; and they, who aim at such a condition, may with some confidence expect his presence and company. 5. Believers, who seriously, tenderly and humbly follow holiness, may attain a great length in it, as this expression of her case signifies: And therefore, the blame is only our own, that our attainments in grace are so small.

The last motive is in the last words, *These are the fruits (saith she) which I have laid up for thee, O my Beloved!* These fruits are many, and at the doors, yet they are laid up for him; they are then such fruits, as are reserved for Christ. And this motive compleats the former, whereby having asserted her fruitfulness, lest she should seem to boast of it, that her graces did so abound, whatever increase they have made, O my Beloved (saith she) I have devoted them to thee; they shall not be for my own satisfaction or boast, but for thy glory; therefore (saith she) *Come*: as one would say, I have such good fruits of purpose kept for thee, which no other shall share of, and therefore I invite thee to come and enjoy them: which is a kind invitation, turning over the acknowledgment of what she had on Christ, as indeed belonging to him, and as only to be made use of for his honour: So then, to *lay up*, signifies, (1.) A carefulness and solicitousness, carefully to gather together, as covetous worldly men use to lay up riches, and to gather them together. (2.) It signifies the success which she had in her endeavour, that there was much gathered, a store of fruits, as in a treasure; so we find *laying up* to have this sense, *Psal. 31. 19. How great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up*, as it were, in store? &c. (3.) It signifies a setting apart of that store from common uses, as men do what they lay up, and a reserving of it for some peculiar use: And the peculiar use, for which she laid them up, follows in these words, *for thee, O my Beloved!* Which implies, 1. That, in her gathering and storing up, respect was had to Christ; and that her provision was not to rest her self upon it, but to honour him with it. 2. That, even when it was attained, she was denied to it, and did not look upon it as if it could be any stock to her self to live upon, but that she had prepared it as an offering to propine or entertain him with: Even as a kind wife would provide what might be for the husband's refreshment and honour, and would be still laying up till he return, aiming singly to satisfy and entertain him with it; So (saith the Bride) this store is for satisfying and honouring of thee, and for thee only, O my Beloved! It is for thy cause, because thou commands it, loves it, and is honoured by it. *O my Beloved*, is added, to shew how affectionately she insisted

in this discourse; and in particular, how well bestowed she thought all that she had laid up was, when it was bestowed upon him: *O my Beloved!* it is for thee, and I have willingly and affectionately laid it up for that use; therefore come and lodge and dwell with me, which is the scope. *Obs.* 1<sup>st</sup>, Increasing in fruitfulness, or growing in holiness, is a work that will not be done in one day; but it will take time, and both carefulness and diligence, to gather together and lay up these spiritual fruits. 2<sup>dly</sup>, When Christ is absent to sense, it is a suitable and seasonable duty to be laying up provision, by fruitfulness in holiness, for his coming and return: Or, when Christ seems not presently to come and accept of a believer's prayers, duties or graces, yet are they not to be rejected and cast at, as null and useless; nor is the believer to desist from performing of them, but to continue and persevere in stirring himself up in the exercise of graces and duties, until he come. 3<sup>dly</sup>, Altho' Christ come not at the first, but suffer many of the believer's duties, and the exercise of his graces (if we may say so) to ly long on his hand, yet they are not lost, but laid up (and grace is no ill treasure) and Christ will one time or other come and make good use of them. 4<sup>thly</sup>, It is no less practick (to say so) or it is no less difficult, in believers walk, to reserve what store they have gathered for Christ's use alone, and to be denied to it themselves, than to get duties performed, and spiritual provision laid up. 5<sup>thly</sup>, It is not enough to do duties, and to lay up fruits, unless they be laid up for Christ; and this is no less a duty than the former. 6<sup>thly</sup>, It is no small attainment in a believer, and a strong motive for attaining of Christ's company (without which all will be nothing) when not only he hath store of fruits, and is painful in holiness, but also is denied to these, as to any use-making of them for his own ends, more than if he had never been taken up in attaining them, and when he reserves the praise of them to Christ Jesus alone, that they may be subservient to his honour: This laying up fruits for him, is opposite to the laying up for our selves, as *living, eating, fasting, &c.* to him, 2 Cor. 5. 15. Zech. 7. 5, 6. are opposite to *living, eating, fasting to our selves*, which in God's account is to be as *an empty vine*, Hos. 10. 1. 7<sup>thly</sup>, Grace is of a durable nature, it can keep, or it will endure laying up: all other treasures are fading, if men lay them up, they will rust and canker; but, the laying up of this spiritual treasure, which makes men rich in good works, is profitable, commendable; and the riches, thereby treasured up, are most durable.

## C H A P. VIII.

## B I R I D E.

Verse 1. *O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother: when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yet I should not be despised.*

Verse 2. *I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine, and of the juice of my pomegranate.*

**T**His chapter carries on the copy of that spiritual communion, which is betwixt Christ and the believer: The Bride speaks most here; and the nearer she come to a close, her expressions become the more massy. It may be divided into these parts, 1<sup>st</sup>, The Bride continueth, and heightens her one great request, of more intimate familiarity with Christ; which is propounded, amplified and pressed, with the insinuation of her success, and after-carriage, in the first four verses. 2<sup>dly</sup>, The daughters of Jerusalem, being charged by her, *verse 4.* break out with a commendation of her, *verse 5.* 3<sup>dly</sup>, She forbears to own them, but proceeds, *verse 5.* to speak to him (as loth to be interrupted or diverted) with two further petitions: The first whereof is, for fixedness in her fellowship with him, that it be not liable to the frequent interruptions of a declining heart, *vers. 6, 7.* The second is for these not yet brought in, *verse 8.* 4<sup>thly</sup>, The Bridegroom replies to this last suit, in good words and comfortable, *verse 9.* From which, in the fifth place, she gathers a comfortable conclusion to her self, *verse 10.* which she confirms, *vers. 11, 12.* 6<sup>thly</sup>, The Bridegroom gives his farewell-request unto her, *verse 13.* Which, *seventhly* and *lastly*, she meets with the ardent expression and putting up of her first, last, and great suit to him, to wit, that he would *make haste*, that is, haste his coming for compleating her happiness, beyond which she hath nothing to say, and until which she is never silent, *Rev. 22. 17.* So then, this chapter doth consist of seven parts, according to the several intercourses of the speakers.

In the first part, the Bride first propounds and amplifies, or qualifies her suit, *verse 1.* (2.) It is pressed with motives, *vers. 1, 2.* (3.) Her attainment and success in her suit is mentioned, *vers. 3, 4.* And (4.) Her care of entertaining Christ, is recorded, *verse 4.*

The suit is in the first words, *O that thou wert as my brother* : This, I conceive, looks not mainly to Christ's incarnation, but to something that might have been by believers obtained even then before his incarnation, and may yet be desired by these who now love him : but, that which is chiefly intended in these words, is the following forth of the love-strain of a heart-longing for Christ's company, in the terms and expressions that are in use amongst men : It hath been ever thought unseemly for virgins, too familiarly to converse with men that are strangers, even tho' they were suited for by them, this hath been cause of reproach to many ; but, for brethren and sisters to be familiar, hath not been subject to mistakes : they who are in that relation may use more freedom, than without offence can be used by others ; therefore, *Abraham*, fearing to call *Sarah* his wife, gave her out to be his sister, that their conversing together might be the less suspected : Thus, the scope here is to press, that Christ would condescend to be so homely with her, as she with boldness and without fear might converse with him ; *O !* (saith she) *that thou wert so familiar with me, that I might confidently converse with thee, as a woman may do with her brother* : And because there is great odds betwixt brethren that are of the same father, yet born of diverse mothers (as *Joseph*, *Simeon* and *Judah* were) and brethren that are also of the same mother (as *Joseph* and *Benjamin* were, who therefore more dearly loved one another) she doth therefore add that qualification, *that sucked the breasts of my mother* ; that is, such a brother as hath been conceived in the same womb, and nourished by the same breasts (mothers being then both mothers and nurses to their own children) whereby, a brother in the most near and warm relation is signified. In sum, The sense is this, *O ! if thou wert to me so condescending, as a brother is to one born of that same womb with him, that I might with the more freedom, boldness and confidence, and sensible out-letting of my affections, converse with thee* : Such sensible breaking forth of affections, we find to have been betwixt *Joseph* and *Benjamin*, Gen. 43. 34. She looks upon all the familiarity, that she had attained, but as that which might be amongst strangers, in respect of that which she longed for and expected : And that this is the scope of this part of the allegory, the words after do clear, *then I would kiss thee, and not be despised, or reproached for it* ; whereas now, in her present condition, which had much of estrangement in it, any claim she made to Christ, was by temptation cast in her teeth, and she upbraided, as if it were unsuitable for her to carry so to him : but (saith she) *if thou would condescend to me, and be familiar with me as a Brother, I would not be ashamed for any challenge of that kind*.

This suit, and its qualification, import, 1. That there should be much loving tenderness betwixt these that are in so near a relation as this, to be born of

of one mother, &c. 2. That mothers who bear children, and are fitted to give suck, should not decline that duty to their children; the giving of suck being a duty no less natural, than bringing forth, where the Lord hath put no impediment to the contrary in the way. 3. It imports, that there are steps of access to Christ, and degrees of fellowship with him, beyond any thing that the most grown believers have attained. There is somewhat of this, even by the Bride to be wished for, that she hath not yet attained. 4. There ought to be no halting or sitting down, in any attainment of nearness with Christ, till it be brought to that measure that no more can be enjoyed, and till it be at the utmost height that is possible to be attained. 5. To have sensible warmth, and condescending familiarity from Christ, and confident freedom with him, is the believer's great design; that is, to have him as a *Brother*: And these two, to wit, confident freedom with Christ, and his warm condescending to them, go together; which the reasons following will clear. They are set down in seven motives, or advantages, which his being as a *Brother* would bring along with it to her; and hereby it will be further cleared, what it is that is here intended.

The first is hinted at in these words, *when I should find thee without*: *When*, is supplied, and the words read in the Original, *I would find thee without*. Now (saith she) I have sought thee often without, and have for a long time not found thee (as chap. 3. 2, 3. and 5. 6, 7.) but if thou were thus familiar with me, I would have thy company every where, and think no shame of it. This supposes, 1. That Christ may be without, or at a distance, even with his own Sister and Spouse: The most sensible manifestations have interruptions. 2. When Christ is without, or at a distance, then the believer's work is to seek him till he find him; he loves not to be separate from Christ, and therefore he pants after his manifestations: An absent Christ, and a seeking, painful, diligent believer, should go together. 3. That where Christ is familiar, all interruptions of presence are easily superable, yea, more easily superable than to others, with whom he is not so familiar and intimate; he may be found by them even *without*, that is, in cases that have in them some obstructions unto intimate fellowship, as *without* is a place that is not convenient for familiar communion. 4. It is a great benefit to a believer, to have Christ's presence easily recoverable, or recovered: It is no small mercy to find him when he is sought. Other things rising from this expression may be gathered from chap. 3. 2, 3. and 5. 6, 7. 5. In general, from all these arguments we may observe, That they all include advantages to the believer, yet she makes use of them as motives to press her suit; which says, That whatever may be any real advantage to a believer, doth sway much with Christ.

The *second* reason, why she desires this, is, that she may imbrace and *kiss* him, and it follows on the former (as each of them depends upon another) I would find thee without, saith she, and *I would kiss thee* : Having found him, she would with delight let out her affections on him. Kisses, amongst men, are the most kindly evidences of their love ; as was cleared, *chap. 1. verse 1.* upon these words, *Let him kiss me* : His *kisses* are kindly intimations of his love to her ; and therefore her *kissing* of him must be a most sensible flowing and abounding out-letting of her affections on him, as affectionate relations do when they kiss one another : It is much to the same purpose with what she said, *chap. 7. — 12. There will I give thee my loves.* In sum, *If thou wert familiar with me* (saith she) *when I find thee, I would sensibly, confidently, and with freedom solace my self in thee, which now I dare scarce do when I find thee, being possessed with fear of thy removal.* The difference between this expression, and that in *chap. 7. — 12.* seems to be this ; There, she desired communion with him, that her heart might be by his presence disposed (to say so) for letting out her love on him, and that she might have the opportunity to do it ; Here, she desires that he would manifest himself more familiarly, that, with the greater holy boldness and confidence, she might satisfy her self in pouring forth her love, by spiritual soul-imbracings, and kissings of him whom she loved. This imports, 1. That there are degrees in the way of believers letting out their love on Christ, as there is in his manifesting of himself to them : There are sometimes they *give him their love*, when they have no access to *kiss him* ; and other times they are admitted to *kissing* of him, as at sometimes he doth them. 2. The more familiarly his love lets out it self on them, the more doth their love flow out on him. 3. It is a mercy to the believer, and highly prized by him, to have access to *kiss* Christ, and to let out his heart and love on him. 4. It says, that at all times believers will not get themselves solaced in Christ : This is an exercise to which their heart doth not frame, till he familiarly manifest himself ; they cannot kiss and embrace him, until his embracements come first. More particularly, if we consider the scope of these words, *I would kiss thee*, and that, *without* ; they imply, 1<sup>st</sup>, A more present sensible object, such as may be *kissed* : Whence observe, Christ's familiar out-letting of himself makes him exceedingly obvious unto the believer ; it makes him so sensibly present, as he may be in a spiritual way embraced and kissed. 2<sup>dy</sup>, It holds out the out-letting of the believer's love on him : From which observe, 1. The great duty of one that finds Christ, is to love him, and to let the heart flow out on him. 2. This should be done whenever or wherever Christ is found ; and so soon as opportunity is offered, the heart should close with it without delay. 3. Familiarity with Christ will not be displeasing to him, but exceedingly acceptable ; other-

therwise, this could be no motive to press her suit. 3dly, *Kissing him*, imports, both a holy confidence, and satisfaction or delight, in her letting out her heart upon him : Which shews, that it is sweet, not only to have Christ loving us, but to get him loved ; and so this is both satisfying to her, and acceptable to him.

The third motive or reason (which depends on the former two) is, yet I should not be despised, or, they should not despise me : That is, *Altho' I found thee without, and were seen kissing thee, and by confident boldness delighting in thee ; yet, if thou wert familiar with me as my Brother, and according to the nearness of that relation would familiarly own me, neither men, devils, tentations, nor any thing else, would have access to despise, upbraid, or reproach me for it, I would be confident against all ; as a virgin, that is shewing her respect to her own born brother, needs fear no reproach from that.* Obj. 1. Believers are subject to be despised, even the beloved Bride of Jesus Christ is not freed from this trial, to be little esteemed of, even as the off-scourings of all things, to be reproached and shamed by men, as she was, chap. 5. 7. to be baffled (to say so) as an hypocrite, by the devil and temptation, as Job was, Job, chap. 1. 2. 2. Believers are not senseless or stupid, when reproached or despised ; they may be affected with it, and may endeavour rightly to have it prevented, or removed. 3. Often the more tenderly that believers let out their affection on Christ, or their zeal for him, they are the more subject to be despised ; for, when she kisses Christ, she looks upon despising then as waiting on her, if he prevent it not. 4. Christ's familiar presence, or, his being as a Brother owning his Bride, is the great thing that guards off, and prevents despising, and procures freedom from reproach, or at least is a bulwark to the soul against reproaches : It is no little advantage that familiarity with Christ brings alongst with it ; for, by his owning of believers, either their carriage is made so convincing, that malicious mouths are stopped, as having nothing to say against them ; or, they are so sustained, under all these outward or inward despising, that they trouble them not, and so they are to them as if they were not. 5. Christ's keeping up of himself, is the dispensation under which the believer is most obnoxious to be despised : The devil, tentations, and men, usually cast up to them then, *Where is their God ?* Psal. 42. 9, 10. and that pierces them : So our Lord was dealt with on the cross ; Job calls this the Lord's renewing of his witnesses against him, whereby (as it were) temptation is confirmed in what it asserted.

There follows, in the second verse, four more arguments, she makes use of to press her suit : We heard of three in the first verse ; the fourth is in these words, *I would lead thee* : The word in the original signifies such a leading as useth to be in triumph, a leading that is joined with respect and honour to the person who is led. Christ leads his people as a shepherd doth his flock,

or a nurse her child ; and this signifies tenderness in him, and weakness in them : The believer, again, leads Christ, as a servant or usher doth the master, or as men do kings and victorious conquerors, whom they honour ; and this suppones stateliness in him, and respectiveness and attendance in the Bride ; she looks upon him as a glorious, magnificent person, in whom, and with whom, she desires only to triumph. In sum, the meaning is this, *If (saith she) thou wert as my brother, when I found thee my self, I would not soon quit thee, but wait with all honourable attendance upon thee.* Obj. 1. Honourable attendance on Christ, and respective service, is a duty that well becomes believers. 2. To give him this honour, is a thing which they mainly aim at. 3. It is a great mercy to them (and they will so look upon it) when they are helped, in a way suitable to his majesty and stateliness, to wait upon him, and do him service. 4. Christ's familiar presence both gives believers the occasion, and also the fitness and disposition, for giving him this honourable attendance ; she speaks here, as if one would say to another whom they respected, *If thou wert in our quarters, I would wait on thee, and think it a favour to have the opportunity to do so : This, or the like, is alluded unto here.*

The fifth argument follows on this, and it is, *I would bring thee into my mother's house :* This is a resolution to perform what she had practised, chap. 3. 4. and was spoken to there. The sense is, *If thou wert familiar with me, (saith she) I would usher thee into the Church, whereof I am a member, for the good of all the family ;* as if a virgin, living in her mother's house, should press one whom she loved, and with whom she might be familiar as with a brother, when she had found him without, to go in and abide with her in her mother's house, as the greatest evidence of her respect ; and, that they of the family might have the benefit of his company, as well as she : So it is here. And it shews, 1. That she would leave no respect, that was possible to her, unexercised towards Christ ; she would not only honour him her self, but she would endeavour to have him made known to others, that they might have a high esteem of him also : Believers whom Christ is familiar with, they will not be satisfied with any respect they can put upon him, but are careful to have him known, and honoured by all others that live in the Church with them. 2. That in her seeking for him, she minded the publick good of the Church, as well as her own : which teacheth us to propose to our selves the publick good, as well as our own particular advantage, whenever we haunt the means, wherein we are called to seek him. 3. That she thought it a great mercy, to be any ways useful for the good of her mother's house : And so believers will look upon it, not only as their duty, but also as their mercy, to be useful to others. 4. That Christ's presence, familiarly manifested to particular believers, doth exceedingly

exceedingly capacitate them for being usefully instrumental in the Church wherein they live.

The *sixth* argument amplifies this, from the benefit that she would have by his being brought into her mother's house, in these words, *who would instruct me*; that is, then she would instruct me, if thou wert there: The ordinances in the Church, whereby believers are edified and instructed, would then be lively and profitable, in a greater measure than formerly: Whereby it appears, that by *Mother*, is understood the visible Church; for, there only are the ordinances which do instruct; and by the *Bride*, is understood particular believers, because it is to them that these ordinances become *the power of God unto salvation*: Or, the words may be read, *Thou would instruct me*; that is, if thou wert brought to the Church, thou by thy ordinances would teach me. The scope in both these readings is one, to shew, that, by Christ's presence in the Church, she expected to be taught, which she looked for no otherwise, nor by an immediate way; therefore, she would have him there. *Obj.* 1. The most grown believer needs instruction, and is still a scholar while he is in the Church upon earth. 2. The ordinances in the visible Church are the means, whereby Christ ordinarily teacheth his people; otherwise, there were no force in this reasoning, to desire him to her mother's house, that she might be instructed. 3. The most eminent believer, even the Bride of Jesus Christ, is not above the reach of ordinances, but is to be instructed by them in the visible Church. 4. Believers should endeavour the enjoyment of Christ's company in the same Church that was their mother, and seek to be instructed there, and should not endeavour to carry Christ away from their mother Church. 5. Christ hath a more full way of manifesting his presence in his Church at one time than at another; even as also at different times, there are different measures of his manifestations to particular believers. 6. Christ's presence in his Church, and with his people, singularly furthers their edification and instruction, and gives a blessing to the ordinances. 7. Believers, when in a right frame, will account it no little mercy to be instructed by Christ in his ordinances, and to have the word blessed unto them. 8. The most sensible and full manifestations of Christ should not, yea, will not, lessen the esteem of ordinances; but both should, and will put the Lord's people in a capacity to be edified by them, and will incline and fit them to profit under them.

The *last* motive is taken from the entertainment she would give him; If (saith she) thou wouldst familiarly manifest thy self, and if once I had found thee, and gotten thee brought to my mother's house, then I would cause thee to drink of *spiced wine*, of the juice of my pomegranate: In a word, I would entertain thee as well as I might, and thou should be very welcome, and kindly taken with, as guests, who are respected, use to be. By *spiced wine*, and the juice of the pomegranate,

*pomegranate*, is understood the most excellent entertainment; as in these countries, it is like (as we may see from *Prov.* 9. 2. and *Song*, chap. 5. 1.) they used to mix the wine they gave their friends, that it might be the more savoury. Now, through this *Song*, by such similitudes, are understood the graces that are in believers; as, chap. 4. 10, 13, &c. chap. 5. 1. and in sum, the sense comes to this, If thou wert familiar with me, and, by thy presence in my mother's house, were making the ordinances lively, then I would feast thee on my graces; and my love, faith, hope, &c. (which are to thee more savoury than wine, with which men use to entertain their most special friends) should flow out abundantly on thee. Hence *Obs.* 1. That believers design and aim at the feasting and entertaining of Christ, when they have his company, as well as to be entertained thereby themselves. 2. It is no little mercy to get respect to Christ discharged; and a believing soul will think it no small privilege to get him to entertain, if he have wherewith to entertain him. 3. Christ's coming to a soul brings sufficient provision for his own entertainment. The Bride makes no question, but there shall be a feast, if he will come; and if he come not, there will be nothing but emptiness there: She doubts not, but, if once he would come to her mother's house, his presence would make enough of good provision. 4. The Lord respects even the offer of welcome from his people, when he is not actually entertained as they would; or, tho' they be not in case for the time to entertain him, yet their serious desire to do it, is very acceptable to him; otherwise, this would be no argument for our Lord Jesus to grant her suit.

**Verse 3.** *His left hand should be under my head: and his right hand should embrace me.*

The third verse is the same, and to the same scope with *verse* 6. of chap. 2. and the words being the same in the original, we conceive they will read better here as they are there, *His left hand is under my head*; here it is, *should be under my head*, but *should* is supplied: And so the words hold out here (as in chap. 2. 6.) a return, which the Bride had to her suit; our Lord Jesus coming, and putting in his left hand under her head, and as a kind brother taking her in his arms, answereth her suit, and satisfieth her desire. This agrees best with the words, as they were formerly used, chap. 2. 6. and with the scope here. The verse following confirms it also, where she chargeth the daughters not to stir him up, which suppones him to be present: So we find the same charge following the same words, chap. 2. 7. as also, her finding him, and bringing him to her mother's house, is followed with the same charge, chap. 3. 5. and she is said to be leaning on him here, *verse* 3. and yet is by the daughters commended,

mended, and not despised, which is a proof that he was present ; for, this is it that made her not to be despised. The meaning then is, *Now* (saith she) *I have obtained what I desired, and he is become very friendly and familiar with me, like a brother ; which was my desire.* And this shews, 1. That Christ easily condescends to his longing Bride, to give her such a degree of his presence as she called for ; and that he doth this so suddenly, is great kindness and confidence : Christ will in this sometimes condescend very quickly to the desires of his longing people. 2. That she observes and acknowledgeth it ; it is no less duty to observe and acknowledge a return, than to put up a prayer. 3. Christ hath a singularly tender way of communicating his love, and of embracing his people ; he can take them in his arms, and make much of them, when he sees it fit. 4. There is a sweet satisfaction, and unspeakable heart-quieting refreshment to be found in Christ's arms ; She thinks it so good to be here, that she speaks of it with much complacency, and carefully sets her self not to have it interrupted, in the verse following.

Verse 4. *I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my Love, until he please.*

Having now access to much familiarity with Christ, as she desired, and being in his arms, she expresseth her care, in this verse, to prevent any new interruption of his blessed presence : As if a woman, having her friend or husband sleeping in her arms, should command all in the house to be quiet, lest he should be awaked ; so the Bride sets her self to watch so tenderly over every thing that is in her, that nothing give him just ground to withdraw : And though she speak to the daughters of Jerusalem, yet the scope shews, she looks to her self ; but it is thus expressed, partly, to keep the form used in this Song ; and so having spoken of bringing him to her mother's house, she makes use of the similitude of keeping the house quiet ; partly, to shew her seriousness and reality in this her care, and the great need that there is of being watchful, even as David often provokes all creatures to praise, and lays that charge on them, thereby to shew his own seriousness in the thing, and the greatness of the work of praise which he was taken up with : so to the same purpose is this resemblance here. The same words were found, chap. 2. 7. and chap. 3. 5. where they were opened. There are two little differences in the original, which yet alter not the scope : 1<sup>st</sup>, That expression, *by the roes and hinds* (which was formerly used) is here left out, not because this charge is less weighty, but it shews a haste and abruptness in her speaking, which makes her omit that, the more speedily to express her charge. 2<sup>dly</sup>, It was before, *If ye stir or awake* ; Here it is (as the margin reads from the original) *why will*

*ye stir or awake?* Which doth more plainly import, (1.) A readiness, or benfif in them to stir him up. (2.) A certainty of the effect of his withdrawing, if they should stir him up, or awake him. (3.) An unreasonableness and absurdity in the doing of it, *Why will ye do it?* saith she. (4.) A pressing seriousness, in her proposing of this question, and urging it so vehemently. From this, and the frequent repetition of this charge, *Obf.* 1. That it is a difficult piece of work, to keep the heart tender and watchful for entertaining of Christ, even when he is present. 2. The strongest believer will take one charge after another, and all will have enough to do, to make him watchfully tender in keeping Christ; there is so much laziness in the hearts of the best, and there is so great need to stir them up to renew their watchfulness. 3. When the heart hath had frequent proofs of its own declining, there is the more need to be very serious in the preventing of it again. 4. There is nothing that a kindly loving believer will have more indignation at, whether in himself or others, than at this, that Christ should be provoked, and thereby put to withdraw; this he cannot abide, *Why* (saith she) *will ye stir him up?* 5. They, who have Christ's presence, will not be peremptory with him, for the constant continuing of the sense thereof, altho' they love it; but will be peremptory with themselves, that by their sin they provoke him not to withdraw, before he please. 6. Communion with Christ is an uptaking exercise to the believer, it takes him so up that he is never idle: If he be waiting for Christ, he is breathing, *O that thou wert*, &c. and seeking to find him; if he enjoy him, he is endeavouring to keep and entertain him; and these two takes him up. Believers are either seeking while they obtain, or watching that they may entertain what they have attained.

## DAUGHTERS.

Verse 5. (*Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?*)----

The daughters of *Jerusalem* come in speaking to the Bride's commendation, in the first part of the fifth verse, *Who is this*, say they (or, who is she) *that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning on her Beloved?* This part of the verse stops the Bride from following the purpose she was upon, with a kind of an abrupt exclamation to her commendation. The daughters now beholding her resting in her Beloved's arms, as it is, *verse 3.* to shew the commendableness of that posture of leaning on him, they are brought in admiring it; and therefore, both the Bride and the Bridegroom are spoken of in the third person, and that by way of question, which supposeth no doubt in the thing, who it was of whom they speak, but implieth an exceeding high estimation of the party.

party spoken of, as being (especially in that posture) exceeding lovely. The words hold out a believer's walk, 1<sup>st</sup>, In the nature of it, it is a *coming up*, or *ascending*. 2<sup>dly</sup>, In the term from which, it is *from the wilderness*: By which two (as was cleared, chap. 3. 6.) is understood the believer's spiritual progress heaven-ward, with their backs on all the contentments of the world, as being unsuitable for them to rest in. These two are spoken of, chapter 3. 3<sup>dly</sup>, There is added here a more express description of her posture, in this ascending, she is *leaning on her Beloved*; that is, as they who are weak, make use of a staff, in climbing of a strait and steep ground, or ease themselves by leaning upon one that is strong, and especially one whom they love, for helping them in their way: So the believer is said to come up from the wilderness, *leaning on her Beloved*; because she, being weak in her self, and unfit for such a difficult voyage, by faith rests on Christ, for helping her in the way, whereby she is sustained, and carried through in the duties of a holy walk, and the difficulties in her way, till she come through the wilderness unto the land of rest. So then, this *leaning* imports, (1.) Felt-weakness in her self, for encountering with the difficulties of this walk or journey. (2.) Strength in Christ, sufficient for enabling her. (3.) Her use-making of this strength by faith; for, that is to *lean* or *rest* on him, or to be *joined* or *associate* to him, as the word is rendred by some; and it is ordinary for faith to be expressed by *leaning*, *resting*, *taking hold*; and so *leaning to Christ*, is opposed to *leaning to our own understanding*, Prov. 3. 5. (4.) Her quieting of her self delightfully in her leaning or resting on Christ, which gave her security against all fears and difficulties in her way, as *John* when he leaned on Christ's bosom, *John* 13. 23. So the believer thinks himself sure and safe, when admitted to lean his soul there. (5.) A progress that she made by this in her way and journey, and that this leaning had much influence on her advancement therein, and upon this account is her leaning mainly commended. *Obs.* 1. That even believers are insufficient of themselves, as of themselves, for the duties of a holy walk. 2. That believers should walk under the sense of this their insufficiency and weakness; and when they come the greatest length in a holy walk, they should not lean unto themselves, or any inherent stock of gifts or grace: Which two suppones, that a believer's conversation, when right, is a heavenly and tender walk. 3. Christ Jesus hath a sufficiency and efficacy in him, not only for the justification of believers that rest on him, but for the furthering of their sanctification also, and helping of them to a victory over the world; hence, 1 Cor. 1. 30. *He is our sanctification*, as well as our *justification*. 4. Believers, in their way, would not only by faith rest on Christ, for attaining pardon of sin by his righteousness; but, would also by faith depend on him, for furthering of their mortification and sanctification: And thus, in the exercise of faith and

holy dependence, we are to *acknowledge him in all our ways*, which is opposed to *leaning to our own understanding*, Prov. 3. 5. This was practised in an exemplary way, by the Worthies, recorded, *Heb. 11.* 5. The exercising of faith on Christ, for sanctification and life, and for performing of the duties of holiness, hath much influence on the believer's success in all these; for, *this is our victory*, whereby the world is overcome, *even our faith*, 1 John 5. 4, 5. And therefore, these that are most in the use-making of Christ, for the helping them forward in their way, cannot but come best speed; for, *leaning on him*, and *going up*, are here joined together: And so they can never make progress in holiness, that make not use of Christ in their endeavours after it; God hath so coupled use-making of Christ, and progress in holiness together, that Christ may bear all the glory of the believer's success in the way of holiness, and that he that glories may glory in him. 6. The believer's walk toward heaven is both a stately, and also an easy and successful walk; for, he is to go about all duties in the strength of Christ; and so Christ bears the burden, and his yoke becomes easy: It is the neglecting of him, that makes all duties wearisome, 7. It is no little piece of the dexterity of a holy walk, and is the great commendation of it, to do all we do by faith, to walk and go on in the faith of his strength, as leaning on him; this makes the Bride's posture wonderful for its rarity and commendableness. 8. Altho' doing of duties will not prove an interest in Christ, and altho' believers come not to perfection, or any exact suitableness in them, yet, the doing of them in the strength of Christ, and walking, as leaning on him, will make out an interest in him: None can actually imploy him, for bearing them through in duty, who have not first closed with him, as their Beloved, for obtaining of pardon: This is the Bride's property, Christ is first her Beloved, and then she *leans upon him*, to be helped in her walk. 9. That is solid faith, which doth empty the believer of himself, in the performance of all duties, as well as of righteousness in the point of his justification: The native work of faith is to make the soul rest on Christ, yea, and actually it makes the soul rest on Christ alone; for, all true faith lays the burden of all duties and difficulties upon him, and so is it compared to *leaning*.

### B R I D E.

Verse---5. *I raised thee up under the apple-tree: there thy mother brought thee forth, there she brought thee forth that bare thee.*

The second part of this verse, in these words, *I raised thee up*, &c. are not without obscurity: We take the words to be a new argument of the Bride's, whereby

whereby (after this exclamation of the daughters of *Jerusalem*) she comes in to press her former suit upon the Bridegroom, and proceeds in it, as being loath to be interrupted or diverted from her direct application to him; wherefore, she seems to take no notice of what the daughters spoke, and makes no reply, but instantly goes on in her wrestling with him, as if nothing had been spoken by them. That they are words spoken to him, the *Affixes* in the Original make it clear; for, although there be no such difference in our language, whereby we may discern whether the word *thee*, be masculine or feminine, as spoken to man or woman, yet, in the *Hebrew*, there is a clear difference; and so, the word *thee*, *I raised thee*, being in the Original of the masculine gener, it is *thee* man, or *thee* my beloved or husband; and therefore, they cannot be understood as his words to her, but as hers to him, seeing it may be clearly discerned in the Original, that they belong to a man, and it is a different word from that which is ordinarily spoken of a woman: and there being no convincing example to the contrary, we must so understand the words here; and, to understand them otherwise, would bring in needless confusion in that language. Next, That her scope is to press for nearness with him, both what went before, and what follows, do demonstrate; which also the opening of the words will confirm. In them there are two experiences asserted, which tend both to this scope: The first is, her own experience, *I raised thee up under the apple-tree*. The second is, the experience of all other believers, *there thy mother brought thee forth, there she brought forth* (for *thee* in this repeated expression, is not in the original) *that bare thee*.

By the *apple-tree*, we understand Christ himself, who is so called, *chap. 2. 3.* because of his fruit and shadow, under which she sat down. To be *under the apple-tree*, suppones her to be near him, and actually delighting her self on him, as being abundantly refreshed under his shadow, as was cleared, *chap. 2. 3.* Her *raising up* of Christ, imports these three things. 1. A duty on her part, (to say so) putting him to shew himself someway for her, more than formerly he had done: so, to *raise*, or *awake*, when it is applied to God, signifies, as, *Psal. 7. 6.* *Psal. 44. 23.* *Awake, why sleepest thou? arise, cast us not off?* So then, the meaning of this expression, *I raised thee*, is, I dealt with, and importuned thee in this. 2. It implies importunity in dealing with Christ; incessantly she stirred him and with petitions pressed him: so, when it is said, *Isa. 64. 7.* *No man stirs up himself, &c.* the word, *stirs up*, is the same word, and imports more than to pray: it signifies liveliness and wrestling in it, as fowls use to stir their young ones when they would have them flying, from which the word is borrowed. 3. It implies success; I not only made application to thee, and was helped to be serious; but I prevailed, and thou was awaked and raised.

fed, and did make thy self in more than an ordinary way manifest to me, and for me, when I, being admitted under thy shadow, took that opportunity to deal with thee. This then is the scope and strength of this first assertion, *It is no marvel (saith she) that I long for thy company; for, by former experience, I have found the good of it, not only for present ease under sad difficulties, but also I have been thereby helped to more liberty in prayer, and have had success for attaining new experience of thy love; therefore, I desire thy company still, and cannot but desire it.*

The second assertion is more broad and extensive, *Not only I (saith she) have found it so; but all thy people have found access to thee, or thy blessed company and presence singularly useful to make them fruitful, as having much influence thereon.* So, by Christ's mother, here, we conceive, is understood the believer, in whom he is formed and brought forth, as we cleared on chap. 3. 11. and they bring forth Christ, 1st, By giving him a being in their hearts, where he had it not before: His image is in some respect himself; and when his image is brought forth in the soul, Christ is said to be formed and brought forth there. 2dly, By bringing forth of the fruits of Christ's Spirit before others; when being, as it were, in travel in the pursuit of holiness, they are helped to manifest his image (after which they are created) in their conversations. 3dly, By attaining to the knowledge of this, that Christ is in them; believers being, as it were, in travel, till they know their delivery; but when that is clearly made out, and intimate to them, then (as the woman that brings forth a man-child, John 16. 21.) they are at quietness, as being delivered. The force of the argument lies in the word *there*, which relates to the apple-tree: *Under the apple-tree (saith she) where I raised thee up, being admitted to thy fellowship; there also they were made fruitful, and delivered from their former pangs and travel, even as I was; and when it is found in the experience of all thy people, as well as by me (saith she) that thy presence and company is so useful, it can therefore be no delusion, nor is it any wonder that I so press after it.* And by this it seems, that bringing forth of Christ, in this second part, is the same in substance with raising of him up in the former, to wit, the obtaining of some sensible manifestation of Christ's respect, by which these, who were formerly in pain to have Christ formed in them, are now delivered and eased from the flames of jealous love, that are as pangs to such as travel in birth (as it were) to have their interest in Christ made clear, as the words in the following verse express. *Obs.* 1. That which in a believer's experience hath proven useful, is in a special manner lovely and commendable to them: Experience is a most convincing demonstration of the worth of any thing, and leaves the deepest impression thereof behind it. 2. The more any by experience have learned Christ's worth, and the more they have tasted that he is gracious, their affections do

the

the more vehemently stir after him. 3. Christ's presence hath many great and excellent advantages waiting on it: It brings ease and quietness to the soul, and gives refreshment under his shadow; it gives access to pray with freedom, and duties then have usually a sensible success. 4. The believer looks upon it as a great mercy to have freedom in prayer, and to be heard when he prays: That by prayer she *raised Christ up*, is remembered as a mercy not to be forgotten; and this yet commends unto her the good of sitting under his shadow. 5. Access to Christ is no time for security, but for prayer; and when the believer is admitted to solace himself in Christ's presence, then should he be diligent in wrestling with him, and improving that opportunity for pressing after a further manifestation of him. 6. There are some experiences that are unquestionable to all believers, tho' they be mysteries to all others in the world. 7. It is not a little strengthning, yea, exceedingly confirming to believers, when their experience and the experiences of other believers co-incide, and jump in the proof of the same thing. 8. Altho' believers may in some things differ, yet there are some things commonly found good in experience by them all: This is the advantage of Christ's company, there was never a believer that attained it, but he found much good of it; and these, who still travel for it, apprehend groundedly that there is an unspeakable good in it.

Verse 6. *Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.*

Verse 7. *Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.*

In the 6th verse, she proceeds to her second petition, wherein she is strengthened from her former experience: The suit is in two expressions, to one purpose; and it is pressed with several reasons, in the end of the sixth and seventh verses; whereby she shews, that less could not be satisfying to her, and this much she behoved to have granted her. The first expression, holding forth her suit, is, *Set me as a seal upon thine heart*: The second is to the same purpose, in the words that follow, and *as a seal upon thine arm*. By Christ's heart is signified his most inward affection; for, it is frequent in scripture by the heart to signify the most inward affections; so, *Matth. 6. 12. Where the treasure is, there the heart will be*; and, *chap. 4. 9. Thou hast ravished my*

my heart, &c. A seal is used for confirming evidences, or closing of letters : They have some peculiar engraving on them, serving to distinguish the deed of one man from the deed of another ; wherefore men use to have a special care of their signet or seal : (for both are one upon the matter and in the Original) Thus *Ahasuerus* kept his seal upon his own finger, *Esth.* 3. 10. 12. So then, from this we may see, that a seal, or signet, signifieth, 1<sup>st</sup>, What one hath a precious esteem of ; and therefore, *Jer.* 22. 24. the Lord saith of *Corniah*, *Tho' thou wert the signet on my right hand*, &c. And, *Hag.* 2. 23. the Lord expresseth his love to *Jerusalem* in this, that he would take *Zerubbabel*, and make him as a signet. 2<sup>dly</sup>, By seal is signified something that makes an impression, and leaves a stamp thereof behind it, that doth not wear out again, as a seal doth on the wax. Next, By Christ's arm, may be understood his care of his people, outwardly expressed in the effects, wrought by his power for their good : So, *Isa.* 40. 11. it is said, he will gather the lambs with his arms, Thus then, to be set as a seal on his heart, doth imply, (1.) Exceeding great nearness to Christ, even to have a special room and seat in his heart. (2.) It imports a settledness in that condition, that she may be set there, as the Lord saith of *Jerusalem*, *2 Kings* 21. 4. there I have put or set my Name ; and as it is, *Psal.* 132. 14. there will I dwell. (3.) To be set as a seal on his arm, takes in further, that, as she would be always minded by Christ, and have him loving her ; so would she have him in all his dispensations making that manifest, and that (as it were) they may bear it engraven upon them, that he minds her ; like that expression, *Isa.* 49. 14. I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, whereby he expresseth his mindfulness of her, that he could look to nothing in all his works, but he saw (as it were) her name engraven thereupon ; for, all his works express love to her. In sum, we conceive, the words look to one or both of these similitudes or allusions ; 1<sup>st</sup>, In general, to men who had such respect to their seals or rings, that they wore them on their fingers, and carried them still about with them : Now, she would be carried about on his heart, and have him sympathizing with her in every thing she meets with. 2<sup>dly</sup>, And more especially, it may allude to *Aaron's* breast-plate, whereby he did carry the names of the children of *Israel* on his heart, *Exod.* 28. 12, 29. which engraving is said to be like the engraving of a signet, in which the High-priest was certainly a type of Christ : However, this is certain, that she would be established in her union with Christ, so that neither desertions on his part, nor backslidings on hers, might marr that ; but that she might be fixed as to her union with him, and made to abide in him, as the impression of a seal is fixed upon the wax, and made to abide in it. *Obs.* 1. True love to Christ will be bold, pressing and importunate in its suits to him ; it will not stand to seek any thing that may endear him to the

Soul,

soul, to have him as a brother, and to be worn upon his heart, &c. 2. Christ's heart and inside is most heartism to the believer, who hath had any discovery thereof made unto his soul; and true love can settle no where, till it get a lodging in his very heart, that is the proper resting place of a believer, and that is the refreshing, which can make the weary to rest. 3. Love to Christ would not only be near him, but would be fixed and established in nearness with him. 4. A stayed, immovable condition, or frame of heart, in the enjoying of communion with Christ, is most desirable and profitable; and therefore, it is no marvel it be longed for. 5. There is no staying or settling of a believer, till he be admitted to dwell (as it were) in Christ's heart, that is, to dwell near him in the believing and enjoying of his love: all other grounds are wavering, but this is stable; and dwelling here, if it were pressed after, would bring more establishment.

This seems to be a peremptory suit; she doth therefore give two reasons to press it, both which shew that it will not be unpleasant to Christ, nor can it be condemned in her: For (saith she) *the love that presseth me to it is of such a vehement nature, I cannot resist it, more than death, the grave, or fire can be resisted.* This reason is contained in the rest of the sixth verse: The second reason in the following, wherein she shews, that the love, that pressed her, was of such a peremptory nature, and so untractable (if we may so speak) as to this, that there was no dealing with it; if it did not obtain its desire, no other thing could quench or satisfy it. The strength of her love is amplified in the sixth verse, by three steps, in several similitudes. By *love*, here, is understood that vehement, ardent desire after Christ's presence, which is kindled in the heart of the believer. And, *First*, It is called *strong*, in respect of its constraining power, whereby the person that loves is led captive, and brought down as weak under it, so that he cannot withstand it: Saith she, *Love masters and will undo me, if it be not satisfied*; love-sickness so weakens the soul, when it once seizeth on the heart, till it be cured with Christ's presence. *Next*, It is called *strong as death*, which is so strong, that it prevails over the most powerful, wise, mighty and learned in the world, *Eccles. 8. 8. there is no discharge in that war*; neither can the most mighty monarch encounter death, and stand before it: So (saith she) *I can no more stand against the strength of this love, it overpowers me, and is like to kill me, if it be not satisfied.* The second step or degree of this love, and the similitude illustrating it, is in these words, *jealousie is cruel as the grave*: It is the prosecution of the same purpose; only, what she called *love* before, is here termed *jealousie*. *Jealousie* may be taken in a good sense, or an evil: In a good sense, *jealousie* is the highest degree of love, or love at its height, and is the same with zeal; thus the Lord is said to be *jealous for his glory*: And it imports, (1.) Ardent

affection, (2.) Desire of enjoying, (3.) Impatience of delay, (4.) A deep measure of grief, mixt with love, for any seeming appearance of a disappointment in the enjoying the person they love, or when they do not meet with love again from the person whom they dearly love: So jealousy in this sense is applied to both God and men, but properly it agreeth only to men; for, there are no such passions in God, tho' he, condescending to our capacity, speaks thus of himself, after the manner of men. Now this jealousy is said to be *cruel*, or *hard*; it is called, *Prov. 6. the rage of a man*: And this was the jealousy, or *zeal*, that did eat up *David*, *Psal. 69.* and so it is compared to the *grave*, which, *Prov. 30.* is the first of these four things that are never satisfied, but wastes all the bodies that are laid in it: So (saith she) *this love of mine, being at a height, torments me restlessly, as if it were cruelly persecuting me, till it be satisfied with a good answer from thee, O my Beloved!* In an evil sense, jealousy signifies not a simple fear of missing the thing men desire, or a suspicion of their own short-coming in attaining of it, but a groundless suspicion of them whom they love, as if they did not entertain their love as they ought: And thus, jealousy is called *the rage of a man*, *Prov. 6. 34.* and so, here, this cannot be altogether excluded; jealousy, thus taken, having in it some unbelief, which torments believers horribly, when the suspicion of Christ's not taking notice of them grows: And this is frequently to be found in the saints cases, in times of desertion; they are then very apt to suspect God's love, and this exceedingly disquiets them, the want of the faith and sense of his love being a death unto them, *Psal. 77. 8, 9, 10.* And so the reason runs thus, *Let me be admitted to thy heart, for my love will be satisfied with no less; and if this be not obtained, jealousy and suspicion of thy love may steal in, and that will be torturing and tormenting*: And therefore she puts up this suit, that she may be set as a seal upon his heart, to have that prevented; for, she cannot abide to think of it. Thirdly, She compares this jealousy to *coals of fire* (the coals thereof are coals of fire) for their vehement heat, tormenting nature, and consuming power; all which are to be found in this strong and jealous love, it is vehement for heat, painful and destructive as fire is: Yea further, it is compared to coals that have a *most vehement flame*; or, as it is in the Original, the *flame of God*; for, so the *Hebrews* do name any thing that is superlative in its kind: And this is added, to shew the horrible torture that Christ's absence, and love-sickness hath with it, to a tender loving soul; especially when carnal unbelieving jealousy enters and prevails, they cannot abide it, but would choose any rod before that, if it were at their election. *Obs. 1.* Love to Christ, where it is strong and vigorous, will make strange and mighty impressions on the heart, which others are not acquaint with, and will break out in such expressions, as men of the world may wonder what they

they mean, none of them having any such feeling or sensibleness of Christ's absence or presence. 2. Where true love to Christ is, it is a most constraining thing; the soul that hath it cannot but pursue for Christ, and go about all means which may any way further its communion with him. 3. Where love begins to pursue after Christ, the longer it be in meeting with him, it increaseth the more, where it is real; and the more disappointments it meet with, it grows the more vehement, till it break out in jealousy and zeal. 4. Believers, that have true love, are ready to fall in jealousies of Christ, and to be suspicious of his love, especially in his absence: This is supposed here, that where true love to Christ is, there may be jealousy of him. 5. Where jealousy enters, is cherished and prevails, it is not only dishonourable to Christ, but exceedingly torturing to the believer: There is not a more vexing guest can be entertained, than jealousy of Christ. 6. Jealousy of Christ's love may be where there is little cause; and often where there is least cause, it is most ready to enter: the reason whereof may be taken from the ardency of the soul's love to him, joined with the mistakes they have of his way; so, *Isa.* 49. 13, 14. For, considering what is gone before, it might be thought, that, whatever any other might seem to have, the Bride had no cause of jealousy. 7. Believers would endeavour to prevent all jealousy of Christ and his love, and by all means seek to be established and confirmed in the faith of his love to them, as that which can only keep and guard the heart against these sinful suspicions and jealousies. 8. Tho' this jealousy be vexing, yet sometimes the believer cannot rid himself of it, it will so prevail, and is so cruel against him. 9. In the similitude of death and the grave, that is here made use of, it is implied, that no man shall escape death and the grave; they are as strong and mighty conquerors, that prevail over all that come in their way: It is clearly hinted here, that the believer carrieth this conviction in his heart, that sometime he will be prevailed over by death and the grave. This is no ill impression, *The graves are ready for me, and, I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister, Job 17. 1, 14.*

Her second reason is contained, *verse 7.* and it is taken from the peremptoriness of her love; for, her love is such as it will have love from Christ again, or no other thing will satisfy it. This is two ways illustrate, *First*, From its invincibleness, which appears in this, no opposition can extinguish it, *Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: Waters will quench fire, but nothing will quench this love.* By *waters*, in scripture, often (as, *Psal.* 42. 7. and 93. 4. and frequently) are understood afflictions, crosses, and even spiritual desertions, *Psal.* 42. 7. *All thy waves and billows have gone over me, Psal.* 109. 1, 2. And so here it saith, Love to Christ is of that nature, and is so strongly fixed on him, that no cross or rod, nay, not the blackest dispensations

and desertions can make it alter ; but it will stick to him through and over all ; as, *Rom. 8. 35. neither famine, sword, pestilence, &c. can do it, but it triumphs over all, though floods of trial and opposition were let out upon it.* The *second way*, how the peremptoriness of love is illustrate and proven, is, that it rejects all offers, that may be made to it by any other that would have Christ's room. There are two sorts of trials, that ordinarily carry souls away from Christ : the first is on the left hand, from crosses ; and when these will not do it, but the thorny ground will abide the heat of the sun ; yet, the second sort of trials, *to wit*, the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, which are tentations on the right hand, may choke the word, and carry the soul away : *But (saith she) true love to Christ will be prevailed over by neither, it will tryst and capitulate with other lovers upon no terms ; nay, though a man would give it all the substance of his house, that is, all that can be given, though he would leave nothing behind, but give it all to one that loves Christ, for love, that is, to purchase and buy away the soul's love from Christ, that it may be given to some other thing that comes in competition with him, so to bud and bribe the soul's love from Christ, that it may settle on some other thing that is offered in his place : What entertainment would be given to such offers and treaties ? True love (saith she) in so far as it is true, and lively in exercise (otherwise where something of true love is, the soul may often be ensnared) would utterly contemn it, or, as it is in the first language, contemning it, should be contemned ; That is, not only would all such alluring offers be rejected, but with a holy disdain and indignation, they would be despised, abhorred and abominated, as unsuitable once to be mentioned : So that true love to Christ will not once enter to capitulate, what to have in Christ's room ; but all possible overtures, which may be made by the flesh and the world to divert it, will be abhorred and lothed, utterly, and accounted as loss and dung, *Philip. 3. 8.* And therefore, the reason concludes, At thy heart I must be, for my love will neither be boasted from thee, nor bribed or allured to be satisfied with any other thing in thy room ; but thee I must have upon any terms, and must not be refused of this my suit, of being set as a seal upon thine heart : And this sort of peremptoriness from love, will not be accounted presumption by Christ, nor is any-ways displeasing, but most acceptable to him. *Obs. 1.* Where true love to Christ is, there will be many essays to cool it, or to divert it, and draw it away from him. It is no easy thing to get love to Christ kept warm ; for, the devil and the world will especially aim at the throwing down of this hold and bulwark, that maintains Christ's interest in the soul. *2.* The devil hath several kinds of tentations, which do all drive especially at this, to cool the believer's affections in the love of Christ : and these tentations may be contrary,*

contrary, some of them mustering the difficulties that follow these that love him, and such as the tempted seekers of Christ may be oftentimes exercised with; for, they often meet with reproaches, or other afflictions in the world: Others of them, again, alluring the heart to embrace some other thing in Christ's room, and making fair offers of advantages to these that will take the way of the world in following of them. 3. The lovers of Christ may be assaulted by both these extremes successively; and when tentations from the one hand fail, then tentations from the other begin; so that the believer would constantly be on his guard. 4. The tentations that come from the right hand, and entice the soul with the offers of worldly pleasure, honour, riches, &c. are more strong and subtil than the other, and more frequently do prevail, yea, sometimes when the other may be rejected; therefore, this is mentioned after the other, as being that wherewith the soul is assaulted, when the first cannot prevail, and so the devil leaves this till the last: when he was permitted to tempt Christ, having tried him with several tentations, at last he makes offer of the world to him, *Matth. 4. 9.* 5. Tentation will sometimes make great offers, as if nothing more could be offered, *even all the substance of the house*; and still it offers more than it can perform, when it is in its offers most specious: The devil at once offered all the world to Christ, *Matth. 4. 9.* though he had not power of himself to dispose of one of the *Gadarenes* swine. 6. The great scope of the world's courting a man with its offers, is to gain his love from Christ; this they had need to look well to, on whom the world smiles most, for then the tentation to this ill is strongest. 7. It is a proof of true love to Christ, when it can endure and hold out against tentations upon all hands, and that when they are most speciously adorned. 8. Where love is true, altho' it may be sometimes (as it were) violented, or the soul in which it is, circumveen'd and beguil'd by tentations (as the experiences of saints do clear) yet when it is at it self, or in good case, it will not deliberately capitulate to admit any thing in Christ's room, but will reserve it self wholly for him: where love cedes, and yields finally, it is a sign that it was never true. 9. Tentations, though most pleasant, yet tending to divert the love of the soul from Christ, should be with indignation, at their first moving, and appearing, rejected. 10. Love will not only refuse a consent to some tentations, but will have a great abhorrency at the moving of them; whereas others, though they may, as to the external actings, resist these tentations, yet their wanting of this indignation, bewrays their want of love. 11. As it is good to be acted, in doing of duty, from a principle and motive of love; so is it good and commendable, to reject tentations upon that same account.

Verse 8. *We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts : What shall we do for our sister, in the day when she shall be spoken for ?*

The Bride's *third* petition, for these that are not yet brought in to Christ, followeth in this eighth verse : Her love is strong in pressing for the enjoyment of Christ; and seeing it hath two arms, as it reacheth out the one to embrace Christ, so it reacheth out the other to bring others in to him : Love is very desirous to have others enjoying him with it self : And by this arm of love, the Bride is pulling in these that are yet strangers, that they may be engaged to love Christ ; and she forgets them not, even when she is most serious for her self : This being an undoubted truth, that, whenever our love is most fervent after Christ for our selves, it will also be most sensible and sympathizing, in respect of the condition of others : when love is hot and fervent the one way, so will it be the other way also ; and when it cools to the one, it also decays in respect of the other. We may take up this verse in these three, *First*, She remembers and propounds her little sister's case to Christ. *Secondly*, There is her suit, in reference thereunto. *Thirdly*, This suit is qualified, in the last part of the verse.

*1st*, Her little sister's case is proposed in these words, *We have a little sister, that hath no breasts* : Here much love and sympathy appears in these three things, (1.) That she is called a *sister*, (2.) *Our sister*, (3.) *A little sister*, and *without breasts*, which do express much tenderness of affection and sympathy. By *sister*, is sometimes understood, more strictly, such as are renewed converts to the faith, whether in profession only, or really, 1 Cor. 7. 15. but that is not the meaning here ; for, the sister here mentioned *hath no breasts*, and is *not yet spoken for*. Again, *sister* may be more largely taken, for one, or all of these three, *1st*, For all men, as partaking of one common nature. *2dly*, For men of one stock and nation ; so *Samaria* was *sister* to *Jerusalem*, &c. Ezek. 16. 46. *3dly*, For the Elect who are yet unconverted, who are sisters in respect of God's purpose, as they are Christ's *sheep*, John 10. 16. and *sons of God*, John 11. 52. even before their conversion ; for which cause, the *sister*, here spoken of, is said *to have no breasts*, as not being yet changed from her natural condition ; and so we take this especially to look to the unrenewed Elect, not secluding the former two. The sense then is, There are yet many who have interest in, and many that belong to thy election, yet uncalled. Now, it is their in-bringing, and the making of them ready to be Christ's Spouse and Bride, that she breathes after, and prayeth for. Next, it is said, *We have a sister*, and so she is called *our sister*, that is, *thine and mine*,

mine : Christ's sister, because of his purposed respect to her ; the believers sister, not only because of their native and kindly sympathy, but also because of the common adoption, to which they are designed. She is called *a little sister*, and that *hath no breasts*, 1. To shew the sad condition that the unconverted Elect are in, like little young children that are unfit to do any thing for themselves, and altogether unmeet for the duties of marriage, as these at age, who have breasts, are : Thus, *Ezek. 16. 7.* the wretched condition of that people, before they were taken in to God's covenant, is set out by this, that their *breasts were not formed* ; and the good condition that followed their being in covenant is expressed thus, that their *breasts were fashioned*. This then is the scope here, to show that this little sister was yet in nature, unmarried to Christ, yea, (as to many of the unconverted Elect) not spoken for, or called. 2. She is called *little*, to express the Bride's pity and sympathy ; as one would say of a young one, that cannot do any thing for her self, What will become of her ? she is a little one.

2dly, The suit is, *What shall we do for our sister ?* This is a petition, that seems to have more affection than distinctness in it : It is proposed by way of question, the better to express her sympathy ; where she disputes not, but again asserts his relation to her, and puts no question but he will be tender of her ; and withal acknowledgeth that there is a duty lying on her self, in order to the case of her little sister, but would be informed and taught by him in the right discharge of it : and so this question supposeth necessity and wretchedness in this sister, affection and duty in her self, but unlearnedness how to discharge it. Now, the way, she takes to be helped in it, is the putting up this petition to Christ, *What shall we do ?* saith she : Not as if Christ knew not what he would do, but it shews her affection to this sister, and her familiarity with him ; and also, that she will not separate his doing from hers, but looks upon it as her duty to co-operate with him, in bringing about the conversion of their little sister.

The qualification of her suit is, *What shall we do for her, in the day that she shall be spoken for ?* This phrase, *to speak for her*, is in allusion to the communing that is used for the attaining women in marriage : We find the same phrase in the Original, *1 Sam. 25. 39.* *David sent messengers to commune with Abigail, that he might take her to wife :* Now (saith she) our little sister is not ready, nor spoken for ; but when she shall be suited or communed with, what shall we do then ? This communing is the Lord's dealing by his ministers in the Gospel, with people, to marry and espouse his Son Christ Jesus ; so it is often called, *Matth 22. 3.* *He sent forth his servants, to call them that were bidden to the wedding :* The ministers of the gospel are his ambassadors, to tryst this match, and to close it, *2 Cor. 5. 19.* and *11. 2.* *The day when they shall*

shall be spoken for, is either whilst the means are amongst people, and so that is *the acceptable time*, 2 Cor. 6. 2. or more especially, when the means have any force on them, and God seems in a more than ordinary way to treat with them, then it is the day of their visitation, as it was in the days of Christ's ministry, tho' that people were treated with before. In sum, the meaning of the verse is this, *There are many who in thy purpose are designed to be heirs of life, who yet are strangers, and not suited or engaged; now, when the gospel comes amongst such, or, by stirring them now and then, puts them in some capacity to be dealt with, what shall be done for them, to help on the bargain, that the marriage be not given up, when it hath come to a treaty, and thou hast by the gospel bespoken them, and propounded it?* It may look to sister-churches, and, no question, the believing Jews, who understood the prophecies of the Gentiles conversion, did then long for their in-gathering, and the in-churching of them (for we were then to them a little sister without breasts) yet we cannot astrict it to that, but now, and to the world's end, it speaks out the believer's desire of the perfecting of the saints, and the building up of Christ's body, as well as it spoke out their desire after this then: And, by the same sympathy, the converted Gentiles long, and should long, for the in-bringing of the elder sister, the Jews, who now have no breasts, and also of the fulness of the Gentiles, who are as yet unconverted; And, according to the strain of the Song, it takes in the believer's respect to the conversion of other Church-members, who being indeed not converted, and not effectually called, they are without breasts, and so to be helped forward in the time when God is bespeaking them, and trying with him.

*Obs.* 1. There may be relations betwixt one in grace, and these who are yet in nature, which grace doth not dissolve, but sanctifie; the little sister is a sister, though unrenewed, and the Bride's desire is to have her gained. 2. There is a jointness, and community of relations betwixt Christ and the believer, they have common friends and interests; and as it is betwixt husband and wife, the sister of the one is the sister of the other. 3. Before men be by faith married to Christ, even the Elect in that estate are lying in a most miserable, wretched condition, as we may see, Ezek. 16. 3. They are lothsom before God, and indisposed and unfit for being fruitful to Christ in any duty, as a little damsel without breasts is unfit for marriage. 4. The converted Elect should be tenderly affected with the sad condition of the unconverted, especially of these that are in any relation to them, and to whom God hath respect in his secret purpose, tho' definitely they be not known unto them: And this tender affection ought to appear, in sympathizing with them, pitying of them, holding up of their condition to God, and praying for them, as the Bride doth for the little sister: And when the case of believers is right, they

they will be making conscience of longing, and praying for the gathering-in of all the Elect, that Christ's work may be throughed and perfected, and that his kingdom may come in the earth. 5. It is a most difficult business, how to get the conversion of sinners promoted, and Christ's kingdom advanced; believers will be non-plussed in it, as being put to say, *What shall we do?* 6. The Lord hath a way of espousing and marrying to Christ Jesus, even such as are by nature most sinful and lothsome; it is such that he suits, wooes and speaks for, that they may be married to him. 7. Christ's great design in the gospel, by sending ministers, from the beginning, was, and is, to espouse a Bride to himself, and to make up a spiritual marriage betwixt him and such as by nature were lying in their blood. 8. He hath a special time of carrying on this treaty of marriage, a day before which he treats not, and after which there is no opportunity of a treaty of grace; it is the day of sinners merciful visitation, and an acceptable time for a people. 9. In this treaty, by the ministry of his ordinances, the Lord will sometimes more effectually drive the design of the Gospel, namely the matching of sinners to Christ, than at other times, and will bespeak them more plainly and convincingly, as he doth, *chap. 5. 2.* 10. When the Lord presseth closing and matching with Christ home upon sinners, there is great hazard lest it miscarry, and be given over unconcluded, through their own default. 11. It is a main and special season for believers to step in, to further the engaging of others to Christ, when the Lord is putting home upon them the suit and offers of the Gospel, and when they are put to some stir, and made something serious and peremptory about it. 12. It is a great happiness to be spoken for to Christ, every one is not admitted to that privilege; and it is our great concernment, to see how we make use of that our day, when he treats with us. 13. There is nothing wherein a believer's love to his friends, or to any others, will appear more, than in endeavouring their conversion, and in longing to have them engaged to Christ. 14. As God's call, in the Gospel, is a wooing, or bespeaking for marriage betwixt Christ and sinners; so believers believing, is their consenting to accept of Christ for their Husband, according to the terms of the contract proposed: and this closeth the bargain, and makes the marriage; for, then the proposed offer of matching with Christ is accepted of.

X X

BRIDE-

## BRIDEGROOM.

Verse 9. *If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.*

This verse contains the Bridegroom's answer unto the Bride's last petition: Our Lord loves to have his people praying for others, as for themselves; and therefore, he so accepts this petition for the little sister, that instantly he returns an answer thereunto, by a gracious promise; in which we are to consider these four things, 1. The party to whom the promise is made. 2. The promiser. 3. The promise it self. 4. The condition that it is made upon. (1.) The party, to whom this promise is made, is implied in the words, *she*, and *her*, that is, the little sister yet unconverted, who is mentioned in the former verse. (2.) The promiser is, *we*, that is, the Bridegroom and the Bride, to whom this sister stands in relation, *verse*. 8. Or rather, *we*, the Father, Son and Spirit (as we took the like expression, *chap*. 1. 11.) for, this work, which is undertaken and engaged for in the promise, doth belong especially to them. (3.) The promise is in two expressions (as is also the condition) 1. *We will build upon her a palace of silver*: A palace (if the word be so rendred) is a place for dwelling in; and here it signifieth the adorning of her to be a mansion for his Spirit, and wherein himself will dwell, which is a privilege that the believer in him is admitted unto, 1 Cor. 3. 16, 17. and 6. 19. and this is more than to be a *wall*, which is an house, but not so compleated and adorned. He is no common guest that is to dwell there, therefore it is no common palace, but *of silver*, both precious, and also durable, and stately for it is matter, which he must have to dwell in: We will make her such, saith he. The condition, proposed in this part of the promise, is, *If she be a wall*: A wall is different from stones, considered in themselves, and supposeth them to be built on a foundation: Now, Jesus Christ being the only *foundation*, 1 Cor. 3. 10. upon which the believer, who is the spiritual temple, is built; this to be a *wall* suppones her to be by faith united to him, whereby she becomes fixed and settled as a wall, who before was unstable: And so the *saie* runs thus, *If she*, the little sister, when she shall be spoken for by the Gospel, shall receive the word, and by faith close with Christ, then (saith he) we will thoroughly adorn her, as a mansion fit to be dwelt in, and we will *make our abode* with her, *John* 14. 23. If we render the word, *towers*, *We will build on her towers of silver*, it comes to the same scope; Walls are for defence, and they are defective till towers be built on them: And so the promise is to strengthen and adorn her more, if Christ be received by her. The second

part.

part of the promise, is, *we will inclose her with boards of cedar*: Cedar was a precious wood, and durable (as hath been often said) and to be inclosed with it, signifies the adorning of her, and strengthening of her more. The condition, annexed to this part of the promise, is, *If she be a door*: Doors make way for entry, and are the weakest part of the wall: The opening of the heart to receive Christ, is compared to the opening of a door, *Psal. 24. 7. and chap 5. 4.* Here he saith, Although she be weak (possibly like a door of fir) yet if she be a door, and give entrance to Christ (for, all, without faith, are as houses without doors to Christ, that cannot receive him) we will not only adorn her, but also fix and strengthen her more. From all which it appears, that these two things are clearly to be found in the scope, 1<sup>st</sup>, That there is an access, and addition of beauty and strength promised to the little sister, even so much as may fully perfect her beginnings, and carry them on unto perfection, as a *palace, or towers of silver*, are beyond a wall; and *boards of cedar*, beyond an ordinary door. 2<sup>dly</sup>, That these things promised, are here made to hang upon the condition of her receiving Christ, and being by faith united unto him, and built on him. That this is the meaning of the supposed condition, is clear, 1. From the promise that is annexed to it; faith in Christ is the condition, upon which all the promises of increase of grace, and establishment, do hang: and the thing promised her can be no other thing; therefore, the condition must be her union with him by faith. 2. It agrees with scripture, to expound her being a *wall*, to signify her union with Christ; for Christ being the foundation, and believers being the *wall*, there must be supposed an union betwixt them, otherwise these names could not denote that relation which is betwixt Christ and the believers, even such as is betwixt the wall and the foundation: Now this union, by which believers are built on him, is made up by coming to him, which is believing, *1 Pet. 2. 4, 5. To whom coming as unto a living stone (or foundation) ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house*: Their coming to him builds them upon him, as the foundation: And, *Eph. 2.* these that are by nature *aliens to the common-wealth of Israel* (as the little sister is here, while she hath no breasts) are, by their believing on Christ, said to be of the *household of faith*, and to be built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles doctrine, whereof Christ is the chief corner-stone, *vers. 19, 20. &c.* 3. It is clear by the opposition implied; for, to be a wall, supposeth her to be that which she is not now, when she hath no breasts: and what that is, is clear from the next verse, where the Bride saith, *I am a wall, and my breasts like towers*, and so *I have found favour in his eyes*: Therefore, to be a wall, is to be a believer, whatever it includes more; for, none is a wall but the Bride, and who find favour in his eyes, as her argument will conclude, and therefore, to be a wall, must include faith. So then, the meaning of the

words comes to this, I tell thee (saith he) what we will do with our little sister, when she shall be spoken for ; If she by faith come to Christ, and be built on him, we will perfect that work, for her eternal communion with him ; yea, though she be weak and unstable, yet if she yield to Christ, we shall make her grace to grow, till she be stable and firm : even as thou, by becoming a wall, hath thy breasts made as towers, and hath found favour to be friendly dealt with, so shall she, and upon the same terms.

*Obs.* 1. That receiving of Christ by faith, puts them, that have been strangers to him, in that same capacity for acceptation and communion with Christ, that his Bride hath, or that these who were formerly believers have by their union with him. 2. All that were bespoken by the Gospel have not interest in the things promised, nor can they apply them, till by faith they be united to Christ, and fulfil the condition to which the promise is annexed, and that is faith. 3. One may really close with Christ, and so be a wall, and yet have many things to be perfected : Grace is not perfect at the beginning, but that wall hath a palace or tower to be built upon it. 4. The believers growing in grace, even after his union with Christ, is a great mercy, and is as such promised here. 5. Growth and increase in grace, after conversion, is no less a work of Christ's, and a gift of God's, than conversion it self. 6. Christ hath given a promise to the believer, for furthering and perfecting of his sanctification, as well as of his justification. 7. Where there is any honest beginning or foundation laid by real union with Christ, altho' it be weak, yet it will be perfected, and that may be expected ; for, Christ's word is here ingaged for it. 8. There are none of the promised blessings that can be expected from Christ, without performing of the condition of believing in him ; and they, who rest on him by faith, may expect all.

### B R I D E.

**Verse 10.** *I am a wall, and my breasts like towers : then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.*

In this tenth verse, and the two verses that follow, the Bride comes in speaking and accepting the Bridegroom's gracious answer and promise : And first, she doth confirm the truth of it from her own experience, *verse 10.* and then, she doth more fully clear and strengthen her experience, by laying down the grounds from which she draweth that comfortable conclusion (*of finding favour in his eyes*) in reference unto her self, *ver. 11, 12.*

First, then, In the tenth verse, the Bride brings forth her experience, for confirmation of the truth of what the Bridegroom had spoken : That they are the Bride's words, we conceive, is clear ; for, this *I*, is she that put up the suit

suit for the little sister, and by her description is opposed to her, as being a wall, and having breasts as towers, which she the little sister had not; and there is none other that hath found favour in Christ's eyes but she. What the scope is, shall be cleared when we have opened the words, which have three things in them, 1. A short description of her own good condition. 2. An excellent advantage that followed thereupon. 3. The connexion of these two.

1st, Her condition is set forth in two expressions, 1. *I am a wall*; that is, what the little sister was not, and what the condition, proposed by the Bridegroom in the former verse, required: In a word, *That condition is fulfilled in me*, saith she; by faith *I am built on Christ, and like a wall stand stable on the foundation*. The second expression, setting forth her condition, is, *and my breasts like towers*: This supposeth a growth and further degree of her faith and other graces, as having not only breasts, which the little sister had not, verse 8. but breasts like towers, i. e. well fashioned, Ezek. 16. 7. and come to some perfection; and so she is a wall with towers.

Next, The privilege, or advantage which accompanies this her good condition, is held out in these words, *I was in his eyes as one that found favour, or peace*. To find favour in his eyes, is to be kindly and affectionately dealt with, and to have that manifested by some suitable evidence: So it is said, *Esther found favour in the eyes of the king, and he held out the golden scepter to her*, Esth. 5. 2. The thing that Moses pitcheth on, as the evidence that he and the people found favour in God's eyes (Exod. 33. 16, 17.) is, that *his presence might go with them*; Whereby (saith he) should it be known that we have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? So then, to find favour in his eyes, is to have his presence in a gracious manner manifested to his people, as, John 14. 23. And in sum, this expression implies these three, 1. Love in Christ's bosom to her. 2. His manifesting of this by his complacency in her, or his making the delight, which he had in her, manifest in the effects of it on her. 3. Her being comforted and delighted in the favour that she found from him.

3dly, The connexion of this comfortable attainment, with her gracious state, is implied in the word *then*, *Then was I*, &c. that is, *When I was a wall, and by faith rested on him, I found this favour, and not before*. It holds out no causality betwixt the one and the other, but a peremptory connexion of order and time; for, tho' God's love of benevolence, whereby he purposeth good to us (such as was his love to Jacob, before he had done good or evil, Rom. 9. 13.) and also his love of beneficence, whereby he actively confers, and brings about our conversion and regeneration, go before our believing in him, and our love to him, and is the cause of our loving of him (who love him because he first loved us) yet his love of complacency, whereby he shews him-

self delighted with the graces which by his love he hath bestowed on us, doth follow, in order of nature, upon our faith in him, and love to him: So, *John 14. 21, 23. He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him; and what is meant by this love, the words following clear, I will manifest my self to him; and so, verse 23. having said, My Father will love him, it is added, we will come and make our abode with him.* This then is the sum of this verse, I am by faith founded on him, and united to him, and so am a wall, and have breasts, who by nature once was not a wall, and had no breasts; by which union my breasts becoming as towers, I did find favour from him, and had his presence friendly manifested to me. The scope, as appears from the coherence of this verse with the former, is to make good, from her experience, the truth and certainty of the promises, which he had made for the encouragement of the little sister, and for comforting of her self, who had been seriously pleading with him on her behalf: *Thus, these promises are faithful, saith she; for, in my comfortable experience, I have found it so: I was once without the evidence of his love, as now others are; but being by faith engaged to him, I have found favour of him, so as others may be assured of obtaining the like, and on the same terms, if, when he is bespeaking them by the gospel, they will close with Christ, and by faith unite with him.*

*Obs.* 1. There are great, real, and discriminating differences betwixt one in nature, and one that is in Christ; the one is not a wall, and hath no breasts, the other is a wall, and hath breasts, which shews a great odds. 2. Believers may come to know that marches are cleared betwixt their estate and condition, now while they are in Christ, and their estate and condition as it was before: Or, believers should set themselves to know, whether marches be cleared or not, or if they may say that of themselves, which cannot be said of others that are not in Christ. 3. It is no little advancement, to be able upon good grounds to assert our union with Christ, to say that *I am a wall, &c.* each one cannot do it. 4. Altho' none ought to be proud of their attainments, yet may believers humbly (where there is good ground) acknowledge the reality of grace in them. 5. Altho' the Lord loves the Elect, and the believer always, yet there are special times or occasions upon which, or ways by which, he manifests his love to them. 6. The believer hath Christ's favour otherwise let forth and manifested to him, than it was before his conversion, altho' this love, as it is in God himself, be ever the same. 7. It is a singularly refreshing thing to find favour in Christ's eyes, and to have that love of his sensibly manifested, and clearly made out unto us. 8. There is an inseparable and peremptory connexion betwixt holiness in a believer's walk, and Christ's manifesting of his favour thus unto them. 9. These that have felt, by experience, the fulfilling of Christ's promises, are both more clear in the meaning of them, and

and more thorow in the faith of them : Experience is both a good commentary upon, and proof of the promises of Christ, which the Bride makes use of here. 10. The experience of one believer in the way of grace, which is founded upon the essentials of the covenant, and is agreeable to it, may be an encouragement to strengthen others, in expectation of the accomplishment of the same thing, when the same way is taken in suing for it. 11. Believers, that are more versed in, and acquainted with experiences than others, should fitly and conveniently bring them out, and communicate them for the benefit of others, who yet have not attained that length. 12. It is the duty of hearers, when they hear gospel-truths and offers (such as were held forth in the ninth verse) to reflect on themselves, and try if their experience suit with them, if they have such conditions in themselves, and have felt the fulfilling of such promises in their own particular experience : And it is comfortable, when their experiences and the promises agree so together, that when he saith, *If she be a wall, we will build on her, or, who loveth me, I will manifest myself to him ;* they may groundedly answer, and say, *I am a wall, and so have found favour in his eyes ; I love him, and so he hath manifested himself to me.*

Verse 11. *Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon, he let out the vineyard unto keepers : Every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.*

Verse 12. *My vineyard which is mine, is before me : Thou (O Solomon) must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof, two hundred.*

It is a great assertion which the Bride laid down, *verse 10.* that she was a wall, and had found favour in his eyes : and it being of high concernment, if well grounded, therefore, to make out the warrantableness thereof, she proceeds to demonstrate it, *vers. 11, 12.* thereby to give believers advertisement, that they should be well seen in the grounds of their own peace. And to shew the solid way how the well groundedness thereof may be found out, and because the conclusions, asserting our union with Christ and interest in him, follow on premisses, whose major proposition is in the word, and whose assumption is to be searched, and confirmed from the conscience, speaking from inward experience and feeling, she doth formally proceed, *First*, By laying down a sum of the Gospel, in a complex general doctrine, *verse 11.* to this purpose, Christ had a Church, which he took pains on, for this end, that it might be fruitful, and that in such a measure. Then, in the *twelfth* verse, she compares her practice with that rule, and finds it suitable ; therefore the con-

clusion

clusion follows. We may take it up thus in form, They who improve the trust well that is put upon them, to bring forth such fruits as Christ calls for in his covenant, may conclude, that *they are a wall, and have found favour in his sight*: This truth is confirmed in the *eleventh* verse, because it is for that very end, and on these very terms, that Christ hath appointed the ordinances in his house, and made the promises to his people, that they should *bring forth a thousand for the fruit thereof to him*; and he will not reject a consequence drawn from that, which he himself hath appointed in his covenant; for, such grounds, as the word and covenant confirm, are only sure to reason from. Then she assumes, *verse 12. But I have been sincere in that trust which was committed unto me, conform to the terms of the covenant, and have a thousand (according thereto) to give to Christ; therefore, &c.* And because this hath need to be well grounded also, she proves it, partly, by instancing the fruits that belonged to him and to the keepers, which she had brought forth, to shew that his ordinances were not in vain to her; and partly, by attesting himself immediately, in these words, *Thou, O Solomon*, speaking to him in the second person, thereby to evidence her sincerity before him, who alone could bear witness thereof, and that it was not mere external performances (which, as such, are manifest to others) upon which she grounds what she asserts in the assumption. This is the native series and scope of the words, whereby they depend on the former, and by which, now before death, leaving this way of communion with Christ, which she enjoyed here-away mediately in ordinances, and before that eternal and immediate way beyond death (which is prayed for, *verse 14.*) she doth collect her interest, and confirm her assurance: The particular exposition of the words will clear it more. From the scope, *Obf. 1.* That thorow perswasion of interest in Christ had need to be solidly grounded, and believers would be distinct in the grounds thereof, and not go by guess with their confidence. 2. The nearer that people come to dying, they would be the more accurate in this search, and have the evidences of their interest in Christ the more clear. 3. We may gather from her example, that the solid and only way to be thoroughly cleared of our title to Christ, is when the grounds thereof are comprehended in the Lord's covenant; as, he that believes, repents, hath the fruits of the Spirit, &c. he is justified, sanctified, &c. and when the assumption, bearing the application of these grounds to our selves, will abide the trial in Christ's sight, and may be instanced before him in the effects thereof, thus, *But it is so with me, therefore, &c.* This is her way of concluding.

We come now to expound the words more particularly: And first, we conceive it is out of doubt, that they are mystically and spiritually to be understood; that is, by *Solomon*, Christ is meant; and by the *Vineyard*, the Church, &c. for, so the strain and nature of the allegory throughout this

*Song,*

*Song*, and the manner of speaking all along, doth require : And there being but one *Solomon* that is spoken of in this *Song*, his having of a vineyard, must be understood as his making of a chariot, *chap.* 3. 9, 10. which, being paved with love, could not be a piece of work framed by *David's* son : We are not, therefore, curiously to enquire here, what place this is, called *Baal-hamon* : Or, whether *Solomon* had such vineyards or not, let out at such a rent ? These things make not to the scope.

Again, that they are the Bride's words, is clear, not only from the scope and matter thereof, but also from these things, 1. She not only speaks of Christ (by the name of *Solomon*) in the third person, *verse* 11. but to him, *Thou, O Solomon, &c.* in the second person, *verse* 12. It cannot therefore be the Bridegroom that here speaks, but the Bride, as personating a believer. 2. She is differenced from strangers and hypocrites, in this, that she hath fruit to give him, and hath that proposed to her self for her end ; and she is differenced from the keepers of the vineyard, the ministers, *verse* 12. they get from her two hundred : It must therefore be the Bride, as personating a believer, who was speaking in the former verse, and continueth here in speaking. 3. The expressions, *verse* 12. where she applieth to her self what she had in the general asserted, *verse* 11. agree well to her, as the opening of them will clear.

The words do contain the proof of a believer's sincerity and reality in the covenant of God, made out by two things put together, 1<sup>st</sup>, By laying down distinctly the nature and terms of the covenant, *verse* 11. 2<sup>dly</sup>, By comparing her self exactly and impartially therewith, *verse* 12. The general doctrine of the covenant, *verse* 11. runs on three heads ; The first looks to the sum and end of all, that Christ had a Church or vineyard, committed or given him. The second looks to Christ's administration in his Church, by external ordinances, *he let it out to keepers.* The third holds forth the ends of his letting out this vineyard, or the terms upon which it is leased, *Every one was to bring for the fruit thereof, a thousand pieces of silver.*

For explaining of the first, we are First to remember, that by *Solomon*, we are to understand Christ ; for, as ever hitherto, so here, the allegory is continued, to express and set forth Christ, in his way with his Church, under that name. Next, The vineyard here is his Church, *Isa.* 5. 7, &c. the visible Church in some respect is his vineyard, as she is separate from others, and appointed to bring forth fruits to him ; but especially the Church invisible and Elect, who in a peculiar respect are Christ's, as given to him, and purchased by him ; and so, frequently in this *Song*, the believer is called a garden or vineyard. Thirdly, The place, where this vineyard is planted, is called *Baal-hamon*, which is the name of no proper place any where mentioned in scripture, but is borrowed for its signification, and it signifieth, *Father of a multitude*, and so it

points out, that Christ's vineyard is planted in a soil that is fruitful, and bringing forth much; and it is on the matter the same with that, *Isa. 5. 1. My Beloved had a vineyard in a fruitful hill, or, horn of oil, as the word there in the Hebrew signifieth, to shew that it was well situate in a good soil, and did ly well, and was by his industry well fitted for bringing forth of fruit. Now, Christ is said, and that in the preterite time, to have had this vineyard; which shews his interest and propriety therein, and title thereto, and that by an eternal right, and a far other kind of title than he hath to the rest of the world beside. Now, this right of Christ's (in respect of which it is said he had this vineyard) is not to be understood with relation to his essential dominion and sovereignty, whereby, with the Father and Holy Ghost, he created all things, and so, as Creator, hath a conjunct interest in them; but this looks to that peculiar title, which Christ hath to the Church of the Elect, especially as Mediator, by the Lord's giving of such and such particular persons to him to be saved, *John 6. 38, 39, &c.* for, he hath this vineyard as distinct from the world, and claims title to the given ones, when he disclaims the world, *John 17. 6, 8. They are mine (saith he) because thou gavest them to me*: Yet, in so far as the visible Church is separated to him by external ordinances (and so all *Israel* are said to be elected, *Deut. 6.*) they may be said to be Christ's; but it is these who are by God's election separated from others, given to Christ, and undertaken for by him, in the covenant of redemption, that especially are intended here: And it is necessary to advert, that there are four divers parties, to which the Church in divers respects is said to belong, 1<sup>st</sup>, She is the Lord's, the Father, Son, and Spirit, his by eternal election; this is the first right, *John 17. 6. Thine they were, to wit, by thy eternal purpose*: And from this flows the second, to wit, the Mediator's right, *and thou gavest them to me*: The Father is the owner and proprietor of the vineyard, *Matth. 21. 40.* called, *John 15. 1. the husband-man*; for, the Church is first his, and next Christ's, who as Mediator is the great Deputy, and universal Administrator of grace, to whom the Elect are given, as to the great Bishop and Shepherd, and to whom all the ordering of what concerns their good is committed: This right is by donation, and differs from the former. 3<sup>dly</sup>, The vineyard is said to be the Bride's, *verse 12.* and *chap. 1. 6.* in respect of the believer's particular trust, with oversight of, and interest in these things that Christ hath purchased for them, and bestowed on them, which they are to improve and trade with; in which respect, *Matth. 25.* and *Luke 19.* the talent is said to be not only the master's, but also the servant's, because the right improving of it brings advantage unto the servant more properly than to the master: And each believer in some kind hath a vineyard, because each of them shares of all the graces, privileges, benefits, &c. that are saving. 4. The vineyard is also the ministers,*

sters; they have a title as under-keepers, overseers and dressers, therefore it is said to be let out to them by Christ; they are as farmers. Hence, when Christ, *Rev. 2. 5.* writes to the angel of the Church of *Ephesus*, speaking to the angel, he calls the Church, *thy candlestick*, and *chap. 2. 15.* while the vines are called *our vines*, the minister's interest is asserted as well as Christ's; so all these interests mentioned in these two verses are well consistent. *Obs. 1.* That our Lord Jesus hath some, who beyond all others are his, by peculiar right and title; and he had this title to them before ever actually there was a Church, this vineyard did belong to him otherwise than others in the world, even before it was, which could not be but the Father's giving the Elect to him. 2. Christ hath a notable right to, and propriety in these Elect who are given him, so that the vineyard is *his*; and it cannot be that one of these perish, without the impairing and prejudice of the propriety of our Lord Jesus. 3. There is an old transaction, concerning the salvation of the Elect, betwixt the Father and the Son, which can be no other thing but the covenant of redemption; for, the Son's having an interest in some, and not in others, supposeth that some were given to him and accepted by him, as that word, *John 17. 6.* bears out. *Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me*, and so they are mine. 4. Christ's Church, or Vineyard, hath the only choice soil in all the world to live into, it is *Baal-hamon* where they are planted; though often their outward lot be not desirable, yet their *lines have fallen in pleasant places*.

The second part concerns Christ's managing of his Church, when he hath gotten it; he doth not immediately dress it by himself, but *he lets it out to keepers*, as a man, having purchased a field, or planted a vineyard, doth set it, or farm it for such a rent; so hath Christ thought good to commit his Church to keepers, that is, to watchmen and farmers, that, by their ministry, he might in a mediate way promote their edification and salvation, which he accounts his rent. The very same parable, almost in the same words, pressing this scope, is recorded, *Matth. 21. 33.* *A certain householder planted a vineyard, and let it out unto husband-men, and sent servants to gather the fruit:* The husband-men are the ordinary office-bearers in the Church (the Scribes and Pharisees did fill that room for the time) the servants are extraordinary prophets, raised up of God, to put them to their duty; so here the *keepers* are the ministers, who are intrusted with the Church's edification under Christ, as stewards are with distributing provision to the family, or shepherds with feeding their flocks, or a farmer with the labouring of his farm that he possesseth: And this name of *keepers*, given here to ministers, agreeth well with the names that ministers have in scripture, watch-men, overseers, stewards, builders, husband-men, &c. and also with the nature of that office, which, *1 Cor. 3.* is to *plant and water this vineyard*: And lastly, with the scope of this and

the like parables, whereby Christ's mediate way of building up of his Church, by the intervention of ordinances and ministers, is expressed. Particular professors are as vines, the ordinances like the press that presseth the grapes, the ministers like the dressers that dig, dung, prune and water the trees, and put the grapes in the press, and gather the fruits, by applying of these ordinances convincingly to the consciences of hearers. *Next*, His setting of this vineyard, or Church, to the keepers, is borrowed from a proprietor, his farming of his heritage, and giving of a lease, or tack, under him, to some other, both for the better labouring of his land, and for the furthering of his rent; and this is opposed to his immediate labouring of it himself: So here, as Christ is the proprietor (whose own the vineyard is) ministers are the farmers: Which implieth, 1. That the minister hath a title and interest in the Church of Christ, which no other hath, he is a farmer and keeper of it. 2. It supposeth, that it is but a subordinate title the minister hath; he is not as a lord of Christ's vineyard, or master of the faith of God's people, but as a farmer or subordinate overseer, he is to be a helper of their joy. In sum, the sense comes to this, That this trust that was put on Christ, of governing his Church, he thought meet not to discharge it all immediately, but hath appointed some others, as instruments under him, to promote their edification, whom singularly he hath intrusted for that end. *Obs. 1.* Since our Lord Jesus had a Church militant, he hath thought good to guide it mediately, by a standing ministry and ordinances; and that is, to set out his vineyard to keepers. 2. There ought none, without Christ's tack or lease, enter upon the ministry, and become keepers of his vineyard; for, they are but tacksmen, and what right they have 'tis from him: Thus, that which is here called his setting a lease, is, *Mal. 2. 4, 5.* called the *Covenant of Levi*. 3. Altho' Christ imploy ministers, yet he makes them not masters, but he reserves the propriety of his Church to himself, and they are such as must give an account. 4. Tho' ministers be not masters, yet are they keepers, and have a special trust in the Church; they are intrusted with the affairs of Christ's house, for carrying on of his people's edification; which is a trust that no others have committed to them.

The third, thing in this verse, is the end for which he lets it out, or the terms upon which; and these are, that every one may bring a thousand pieces of silver for the fruit thereof: And so the condition, upon which it is set out, is, that he might have a competent revenue and fruit, as is clear from *Isa. 5.* and *Matth. 21.* and the rent is agreed on by himself, and it is a thousand silverlings, which is mentioned, *Isa. 7. 23.* as a great rent. The number is a definite for an indefinite, saying, in sum, That Christ's scope, in letting out his Church, is thereby to make her fruitful, that by his servants ministry he might have

rent

rent from her, as he saith, *Jo. 15. 16. I have chosen, and ordained you, to go and bring forth fruit, &c.* which is especially to be understood in respect of their ministerial-fruit (to say so) or the fruit of their ministry. The sum required is alike to all, *that every one may bring, &c.* not implying, that all ministers will have alike fruit in effect, or *de facto*; but, to shew, that all of them have one commission, and *de jure*, or of right, ought to aim at having much fruit to the Landlord, and would by no means seek to feed themselves, but seek the Master's profit. The words aim at these four things, 1<sup>st</sup>, That Christ's great design in planting of a Church, and sending of a ministry, is to have souls saved; that is the fruit which he aims at, for the travel of his soul: And so to have his people brought on towards heaven, by every step of knowledge, conversion, faith, repentance, holiness, till they be brought compleatly through. 2<sup>dly</sup>, It supposeth the peoples duty, that they, who are planted in the Church, should be fruitful: This vineyard bears well, else the keepers could not pay so much. 3<sup>dly</sup>, The ministers duty is here implied also, and it is to crave in Christ's rent, that is his office, as a factor or chamberlane, to gather it in; So *Matth. 21. 31. He sent his servants to gather in the fruits of the vineyard*: Ministers are to labour amongst the people, and either to bring fruit, or a report of ill access unto Christ. 4<sup>thly</sup>, Whatever fruits the minister have to render to Christ, he must return a reckoning; So the word, *bring*, imports a returning of an account to the owner that sent him.

The last thing is the peremptoriness of this lease, in respect of the fruits or rent, which is held forth in two things, 1<sup>st</sup>, It is determined, it must be a *thousand*: Which saith, 1. It is not free to ministers to call for, or to accept of what they will, or what men will, as enough for Christ's due; he must determine himself what he will have, and none other, and he hath determined it. 2. There can be no alteration of the terms which Christ hath set down and imposed, it is definite in it self what every one must bring. Again, 2<sup>dly</sup>, Its peremptoriness appears in this, that *every one*, none excepted, are put at for this rent: This is the great article in all their leases, *fruit, fruit*. *Obs.* 1. Every minister of the Gospel hath a weighty trust put on him, in reference to the Church's edification. 2. Ministers right discharging of their trust, may have much influence on a people's thriving, and Christ's getting of his rent from amongst them. 3. All Christ's ministers have every one of them the same commission, for the same end, and every one of them should endeavour fruits proportionable thereto. 4. The Lord hath every minister's fruit, as to the event, determined, as well as their duty is appointed them. 5. Though all ministers have not alike success, in respect of the number of souls brought in by their ministry; yet, where there is honesty and diligence, the  
Lord

Lord will account it a thousand, as well as where the fruit is more: Therefore are they alike in his reckoning, though not in the event. O! but an unfruitful minister, and unfaithful also, who, beside what fruit a common Christian should render, ought to render a thousand for his ministry, will be much in Christ's debt, when he shall reckon with him! Let ministers consider well this double reckoning.

Having laid down the general doctrine, *verse 11.* she doth now in the *twelfth* verse make application thereof to her self; and this she doth, 1. By asserting of her own sincerity. 2. By proving it in two instances. Her assertion is, *My vineyard, which is mine, is before me*: The Bride's vineyard is the particular trust which is committed to her, in reference to her soul's estate; called a vineyard, 1<sup>st</sup>, Because every particular believer, intrusted with his own soul's concernment, is a part of, and of the same nature with the Church of Christ, which is called a vineyard in scripture. 2<sup>dly</sup>, Because of the variety of graces bestowed on her, and the ordinances and privileges, whereof she is a partaker with the whole, as is said. It is called *hers*, because she must make a special account for her own soul, and the talent that is given to her, according to the trust that is put on her. We have almost the same phrase, *chap. 1. 6.* where the Bride calls it, *mine own vineyard*: This vineyard is said to be *before her*, which is like the expression, *Psal. 18. 22. all thy judgments were before me*; which the scope, by the words foregoing and following, shews to be, not a pleading of innocency, but of sincerity and watchfulness in *keeping himself from his iniquity*; and it is to be understood in opposition to *departing wickedly from God*, mentioned *ver. 21.* And thus, to have her vineyard before her, signifieth watchfulness and tenderness, as these who have their eye always on their orchard or vineyard; and it doth import, (1.) Watchfulness, as has been said. (2.) Diligence and carefulness, so it is opposed to the hiding of the talent, *Luke 14.* she did not so, but had the talent, she was intrusted with, still before her, and among her hands, that she might trade with it. (3.) It imports tenderness and conscientiousness, and so is opposed to mens casting of God's law *behind their backs*, *Psal. 50. 16.* This she did not, but the work God had appointed to her, and the trust which was committed to her, was always in her eye. (4.) It implies sincerity and honesty in aiming at her duty, and that by a constant minding of it, as suffering it never to be out of her sight: All which, being put together, holds forth the sense of the words, *Christ hath given every one in his Church a trust* (which is, as it were, the vineyard that every believer ought to have before him) *and that* (saith she) *which was committed to me, I have been singly and conscientiously careful to do my duty in reference thereunto, so as I have a testimony in my conscience of it.* And thus her case is far different from what it was, *chap. 1. 6.* where she acknowledgeth that her own vineyard she

she had not kept. *Obs.* 1. It is no matter how well one be acquainted with the general truths of the Gospel, if there be not a conformity of practice: Whatever knowledge Christians have, it will never further their peace, except their practice be suitable. 2. Every member of the Church, and every believer, hath a particular trust committed to him; and he must be countable for his carriage in reference thereto. 3. The right discharging of this trust calls for watchfulness and diligence, and it will require daily oversight and attendance, that so the believer's vineyard may be always before him. 4. They who assiduously wait upon the work committed to them, may through grace make good progress in it, and attain to a good testimony from their own consciences thereanent. 5. It is exceeding comfortable to believers, when they have a testimony within them, that they have been diligent and careful in the duty committed to them. 6. Believers would reflect on their carriage in the trust committed to them, that they may be able to make some distinct report concerning the same. 7. They who are most tender in their duty, are also most diligent to search how it is with them, that they may know the condition of their vineyard, whether it thrive or not. If it be moved here, how she could assert so much of her condition, seeing, *chap.* 1. 6. she acknowledgeth the contrary, that her own vineyard, or, the vineyard which was hers, she had not kept; and it is evident, *chap.* 5. 3. that she was under a great measure of security, in which case she fell into many escapes? I answer, Both may be true, in divers considerations, 1<sup>st</sup>, As David in one place acknowledged sin, yet, *Psal.* 18. 21, 22, &c. pleadeth sincerity; so doth she here. *Obs.* 1. There may be a just ground of a plea for sincerity, where there is much guilt to be acknowledged: These are not inconsistent, otherwise she could not assert her sincerity so confidently here. 2. Believers plea for peace in the discharge of their duty, and the testimony of their conscience thereanent, is not founded on perfection of degrees, but on sincerity. 2<sup>d</sup> Ans. *Chap.* 1. 6. contains the Bride's case at one time; This speaks of her case afterward, when by repentance she was recovered and restored to his friendship. *Obs.* 1. There may be a great difference in the way of one and the same believer, in respect of different times: At one time (possibly in youth) most unwatchful, at other times tender and serious. 2. These that sometimes have been under many challenges for unwatchfulness, may through God's blessing afterward attain a good outgate, both from their sins and challenges. 3. Bygone failings will not, nor should not, marr a present favourable testimony from the conscience, when God hath given to one the exercise of faith, repentance and true tenderness. 3<sup>d</sup> Ans. Since these failings, Christ hath spoken peace to her; and therefore now she remembers them not, for marring of her peace, tho' otherwise she hath regretted them for her humbling. *Observe,* When Christ speaks peace, believers would not

obstruct it, by continuing the resentment of former provocations and quarrels to the prejudice thereof, tho' they should still mind them for furthering of their own humiliation.

She comes, in the next place, to make out this assertion; which is done, 1<sup>st</sup>, By the matter of her words, while she instanceth the fruits, that belonged both to the owner and to the keepers. 2<sup>dly</sup>, By the manner of her words, while she turneth her speech over to Christ himself, *Thou, O Solomon, shall have a thousand* (for so it will read, as well as *must have*, &c. seeing either of the words, *shall*, or *must*, may be supplied) and this shews both what he should have, and with what cheerfulness she bestowed it on him.

And, *First*, She instanceth the fruits that Christ should have, and these are *a thousand*: By the *thousand*, that Christ is to get, is understood that which was appointed and conditioned in his lease of the vineyard, and is mentioned, *verse 11*. It is, in a word, *Thou shalt have what thou hast appointed, the terms shall not be altered by me*. Hence it appears, that the *thousand*, which the minister was to bring in as the revenue of the vineyard, is the engaging of souls to Christ, and the making of them fruitful; for then gets Christ his rent from his people, when this is effectuated by the ordinances. *Obs.* 1. That fruits are the best evidence of sincerity. 2. That there can be nothing offered to Christ as fruit, or which can be an evidence or proof of sincerity, but that same, for the matter and manner, which is prescribed by him in his covenant: Our fruits must be suitable to what is called for, and accepted by him, or they will be no ground of peace. 3. True sincerity will never alter the terms that Christ hath set down in his covenant, nor lessen his rent which he hath prescribed as his due, but will think that most suitable which he hath prescribed, and will think it a mercy to have that to render to him.

The *second* instance, proving her fruitfulness, holdeth forth what the keepers should receive; *the keepers shall have two hundred*: *Two hundred* is a definite number for an indefinite. The scope is to shew, that she acknowledged Christ's care, in providing watchmen and ordinances to her: and as they were not useless to her, but were blessed for their good; so he should have honour, and their pains taken on her, by her fruitfulness, should redound to their commendation and glory, yet (as it becomes) in a lesser degree than to the Master, and without wronging of the rent due to him; this *two hundred* (saith she) ought not, and shall not diminish his thousand. Now, this may relate either to the reward that faithful ministers shall have from Christ, spoken of, *Dan. 12. 3*. O what joy and glory will result to them, from the people's fruitfulness (amongst whom they have laboured) in the day of the Lord! That they have not run in vain, but with much success, will bring them much joy in that day; so, *1 Thess. 2. 19, 20*. *What is our hope* (saith the Apostle) *or*

*crown*

*crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming? For ye are our glory and our joy. It is a piece of their life and satisfaction, to see the work of the Gospel thrive amongst the people: We live (saith Paul) 1 Thess. 3. 8. if ye stand fast in the Lord. Or, 2dly, It may look to that which is called for from a people to their ministers; even here, they are to acknowledge them that are over them for their works sake, to obey and submit to them, yea, to give themselves to them by the will of God, having given themselves first to Christ, 2 Cor. 8. 5. And this being a testimony of believers sincerity, it looks like the scope; and so the sense is, Thou shalt have (saith she) that which is called for, as thy due, and the keepers shall have what respect and encouragement is due to them, for thy sake.*

This *two hundred*, belonging to the keepers, is added here, and was not mentioned in the former verse; because there the terms that were required of the keepers themselves were set down; here the duty of every particular believer is expressed, which is to give Christ his due, and, in doing that, to give to his ordinances and ministers, as commisionate from him, what is their due: and this is to be given them, not as men, nor as believers, but as keepers; which tho' immediately it be given to them, as to the ambassadors of Christ, yet that obedience, submission, &c. being to his ordinance, and given them only *for their work's sake*, 1 Thess. 5. 3. it is rent also due to him, and called for by him.

If it be asked, why her giving of *two hundred* to the keepers, is subjoined to the giving of him *a thousand*? The answers to this are so many observations from the words; and the *first* is, That these who are trusted by Christ to be keepers of the vineyard, and his ministers, ought also to be respected by the people over whom they are set; and Christ allows this on them. *2dly*, Where Christ is respected and gets his due, there the keepers will be respected and get their due: If Christ be made welcome, *the feet of them that bring glad tidings will be beautiful*, Isa. 52. 7. *3dly*, It is a good sign of honesty and sincerity before Christ, when ministers and ordinances are respected in their own place, with subordination to the respect that is due to Christ; therefore it is mentioned here. *4thly*, It is no burden to an honest believer to acknowledge Christ's ministers, to obey their doctrine, and submit to their censures; for, sincere believers both willingly do this, and engage to do it, as the Bride doth here. *5thly*, The respect, that is given to ministers, should be given to them as to his ministers, without derogating from, or incroaching upon, that which is the Master's due; Therefore, his *thousand* is reserved whole for him, and this *two hundred* is no part thereof. *6thly*, Where Christ gets his due amongst a people, and where his ordinances be received, there, and there only do ministers get their due; for, it is (as Paul saith) not yours, but you, that we

seek: and less will not be accepted by faithful ministers; they will never think they get their due, if the Gospel be not taken well off their hand.

The last thing in the verse is the way she takes to prove her uprightness, by attesting Christ to bear witness to the sincerity of her fruits; and this is held forth in the change of the person from the third to the second, *Thou, O Solomon* (saith she) *shall have a thousand*: Which, in short, is done for evidencing of her sincerity, that it was such as might abide his trial; and so she doth pass sentence upon her self, as in his sight, who knew what was truth: And this doth not proceed from boasting, but from humble confidence, being desirous that he would accept of it, and approve her in it. *Obs.* 1. Sincerity gives one boldness in approaching to Christ. 2. It is a good evidence of sincerity, when believers are not very anxious and careful what is the judgment of men concerning them, if they may have Christ's approbation; and therefore they consider their case and practice as speaking to Christ, and before him. 3. It is delectable, in the most spiritual passages of our inward walk, to turn them over into addresses to Christ, and to speak them over betwixt him and us. 4. It is best gathering conclusions concerning our condition, and best learning how to esteem of it, when we are set as in Christ's presence, and are speaking to him: Every thing will then be best discerned, and the soul will be in the best posture for discerning it self.

### BRIDEGROOM.

Verse 13. *Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice, cause me to hear it.*

The thirteenth and fourteenth verses contain the last part of this kindly conference, that hath been betwixt these two loving parties, and express their farewell and last suits, which each of them hath to the other. He speaks in this verse, and being to close, as a kind Husband, leaving his beloved Wife for a time, he desires to hear frequently from her till he return; this is his suit: And she, like a loving Wife, intreats him to hasten his return, in the next verse; and this is the scope of both these verses. That the words in this thirteenth verse are spoken by him, appears by the title he gives the Bride, *Thou that dwellest in the gardens*, which in the Original is in the feminine gener; as if one would say, *thou woman*, or, *thou bride*, or, *thou my wife*: Or, take it in one word, as it is in the Original, it may be rendred, *O inhabitress of the gardens*, which can be applied to none other but to her; and therefore these words must be spoken by him to her, and thus the scope laid down is clear.

There

There are three parts in the verse, 1<sup>st</sup>, The title he gives her. 2<sup>dly</sup>, A commendation, that is insinuated. 3<sup>dly</sup>, A request made to her, or duty laid on her. The title is, *Thou that dwellest in the gardens*: By *gardens*, in the plural number, we understand (as chap. 6. 2.) particular congregations, where the ordinances are administrate; called *gardens* in the plural number, as contradistinguished from the catholic Church, and from a particular believer, who are also called a *garden* in the singular number. To *dwell in*, or inhabit these gardens, imports three things; (1.) A frequenting of these meetings. (2.) A continuance in them ordinarily, as if there were her residence. (3.) A delight in them, and in the exercises of his worship and service there. And, in sum, the meaning is, *Thou, my Bride, who frequentest and loves the assemblies of my people, and my publick ordinances, &c.* Obs. 1. That Christ Jesus loveth to leave his people comforted, and therefore is distinct in this his farewell, that there be no mistakes of him in his absence: And this way he used also with his apostles, *John* 14. 13, 14, 15, &c. before his ascension. 2. Christ hath ordinarily ever preserved the publick ordinances, by particular assemblies in his Church. See chap. 6. 2. 3. Where God's people are in good case, there the publick ordinances are most frequented and esteemed of; and still the better in case they be, the ordinances are the more prized, and haunted by them: for, this is a special character and property of such, that they love to dwell among the ordinances, *Psal.* 27. 4. Also, this is pleasant and acceptable to Jesus Christ; and the title, he gives the Bride here, shews his approbation thereof.

The second part of the verse, namely the commendation he gives her, is insinuate in these words, *The companions hearken to thy voice*: By *companions*, here, are understood particular believers, members of the Church, called also *brethren* and *companions*, *Psal.* 122. 8. and the *brotherhood*, *1 Pet.* 2. 17. So also, *Psal.* 45. 14. and 119. 63. *I am a companion of all that fear thee, &c.* And this title is given them for these two reasons, 1<sup>st</sup>, Because there is jointness and communion amongst them, in all their interests, both of duties and privileges, and also in sufferings, &c. and so *John*, *Rev.* 19. calls himself their *brother* and *companion* in tribulation: They are all *fellow-citizens* of one city, *Eph.* 2. And, 2<sup>dly</sup>, Because they have a familiar way of living together, according to that joint-interest, by sympathizing with each other, freedom to each other, and kindliness of affection to one another; opposite to that strangeness and particularness that is amongst the men of the world: And this is the right improving of the former, and results from it. Next, by the *Bride's voice*, is here understood her instructions, admonitions, and such parts of christian-fellowship which tends to edification, wherein that companionry (so to speak) doth most appear: An example whereof we find in the instruction

instructions she gave to the daughters, chap. 5. The companions their *hearkning to her voice*, is more than simple hearing (for hearkning and hearing are much different, and have different words in the original) and it implieth, their laying weight on what she said, by pondring of it, and yielding to it, as the daughters did, chap. 6. 1. to which this may relate. And so the meaning is, *Thy fellow-worshippers (saith he) with reverence and respect, receive thy words, thou speaks so weightily unto them.* And this doth import not only the practice and duty of the Bride and her companions, but also a commendation of them; both which we may take up in the doctrines. *Observ.* 1. That there is a most friendly union and familiar relation amongst all believers; they are *companions* in this respect, though there may be many differences in externals, which this takes not away. 2. Believers ought to walk friendly together, according to that relation; and it is pleasant when they converse together as such, *Psal.* 133. 3. Believers ought not to be useles in their fellowship and mutual conversing one with another, but would be speaking, by instructions, admonitions and exhortations, that others with whom they converse may hear their voice. 4. Believers would not only hearken to publick ordinances, and the word spoken by office-bearers in the Church, but also to that which is spoken by a *companion*, when it is edifying. 5. It is a thing pleasant to Jesus Christ (who takes notice how companions walk together) when there is conscience made of mutual fellowship, with fruit and freedom, amongst his people: This were good companionry. 6. God's making the stamp of his Spirit on a particular believer, to have weight on others, so as their fellowship with them hath success, should provoke the believer to pursue more after fellowship with Christ himself; which is the scope of this part of the verse, compared with that which follows.

The last part of the verse, containing his desire to her, or the duty he layeth on her, is in these words, *Cause me to hear it*: The words, as they are in the original, are, *Cause to hear me*; which occasioneth a twofold reading, 1. *Cause me to be heard*, and let me be the subject of thy discourse to others; seeing they give ear unto thee, improve that credit which thou hast with them for that end: Thus this same phrase is rendred, *Psal.* 66. 8. *Make the voice of his praise to be heard*, or, as it is in the original, *Cause to be heard the voice*, &c. 2. They may be read as they here stand, *Cause me to hear it*; and thus Christ desires, he may be the object spoken unto, as by the former reading he is to be the subject spoken of: So this same phrase is rendred, *Psal.* 143. *Cause me to hear thy loving kindness.* And this translation agrees well with the scope here, where, before he brake off communing with the Bride, as in the first part of the verse he had commended her for frequenting of publick ordinances, and in the second, for her keeping fellowship with others, in both which her duty,

duty is insinuated; so here, he calls for her keeping of fellowship with himself, by her sending frequent messages to him in prayer; which he not only requires as a duty, but now requests for as a favour (to speak so) that he may hear often from her, which he will account as much of, as any man will do of hearing from his wife in his absence. And thus, to make him hear her voice, is by frequent prayer to make addresses to him; as, *Psal. 5. 3.* In the morning shalt thou hear my voice; and, *chap. 2. 14.* of this *Song*, speaking to the Bride, *Let me hear thy voice*, saith he. *Observ. 1st,* That though Jesus be a great Prince, and sometimes be absent to the sense of his people, yet hath he laid down a way how his Bride may keep correspondence with him, and let him hear from her when she will, in his greatest distance: He hath, as it were, provided posts for that end, prayers, ejaculations, thoughts, looks, if awakened by his Spirit, which will carry their message very speedily and faithfully. *2dly,* The Bride ought to be frequent in sending posts and messages to her blessed Bridegroom, that he may hear from her; and both duty and affection call for this. *3dly,* Messages from the believer are most welcome and acceptable to Jesus Christ they are as messages from a loving wife to an husband at a distance, and believers may expect that such messages shall be well entertained: they cannot be too frequent in suits and prayers to him, when these duties are rightly discharged; and there will be no letter sent to him so short, or ill written, but he will read it: And sure, the neglecting of this, is a sin doth exceedingly displease and wound our kind Bridegroom. *4thly,* In this verse, frequenting publick ordinance, fellowship with believers, and much corresponding with Christ in secret prayer, are all put together, to shew, that they who rightly discharge the duties of publick worship, and the duties of mutual fellowship, and the duties of communion and corresponding with Christ in prayer, must necessarily join altogether; and when it goes well with a believer in one of these, they will all be made conscience of: And this last is subjoined, as the life of both the former, without which they will never be accepted by him.

### B R I D E.

Verse 14. *Make haste, my Beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.*

The last verse hath in it the Bride's last and great suit to her Bridegroom, that he would haste his return. As in the former verse the Bridegroom comprehended all his will, as it were, in one suit to the Bride; *Let me often hear from thee, that I may know how it is with thee*, said he: So here, she sums up all  
her

her desire in one suit, which to her is both first and last, *I beseech thee* (saith she) *my Beloved, make haste and do not tarry*. In the words there are, 1. Her suit. 2. The title she gives him. 3. Her repeating and qualifying of her suit. Her request is, *make haste*: The word, in the original, signifieth, *flee away*, importing the greatest haste and speed that may be; so would she have Christ hastening his coming in the most swift manner: whereby the holy impatience of her affection, that cannot endure delays, doth appear; therefore abruptly she breaks out with this as her last suit, and that which especially her heart desires of him. That it is for a speedy return, the scope, her love that expresseth it, and the manner which she useth through the *Song*, doth clear; and there being two comings of Christ spoken of in scripture, 1<sup>st</sup>, His coming in grace, which already she had prayed for, and it is promised, *John* 14. 21, 23. 2<sup>dly</sup>, His coming in glory at the last day to judge the world; We conceive that it will agree with her scope here, to take in both, but principally the last, that is, her desire, that Christ Jesus would hasten his second coming: Not that she would have him to precipitate, or leave any thing undone that is to go before the end; but her desire is, that in due time and manner it may be brought about, and that what is to go before it, may be hastned, for making way for it: For, the phrase, *haste*, my Beloved, is indefinite, and therefore it may look both to his second coming, and to all that must necessarily preceed it; and therefore, so long as there is yet any thing to be performed, as previous to his coming, she bids him hasten it. (2.) We take this desire to look mainly to his second coming, because that only can perfect believers consolation, and put an end to their prayers: Till he come, their consolation cannot be full, and all *shadows are not away*, chap. 2. 17. There is ever something to be done, and therefore they have ever something to pray for (to wit, *that his kingdom may come*) till that time. (3.) This is the great, joint, and main suit of all believers; they all concur in this, *Rev.* 22. 17. *The Spirit and the Bride say, Come, &c.* It is essential to all, who have the Spirit, to join in this suit; and the Bride cannot but be supposed to love the last appearing of our Lord Jesus, which will perfect all her desires: And this coming of his was *prophefied of by Enoch, the seventh from Adam, Jude, verse 14.* and was delighted in by believers (*Psal.* 96. 12, &c. *Psal.* 98. 6, 7.) before *Solomon* wrote this.

2<sup>dly</sup>, The title, which she gives him, is, *my Beloved*, that which ordinarily she gave him, and is here insert, 1. To be a motive to press her suit, and it is the most kindly motive which she could use to him, that there was such a relation betwixt him and her; and therefore she prayeth, that he would not leave her comfortless, but return again. 2. 'Tis made use of as a stay to her faith, for sustaining of her against discouragement: And that there is such a ty standing betwixt him and believers, is a notable consolation, seeing he is faithful and kind in all his relations; and by this she sweetens

sweetens this her farewell-wish. 3. It is an expression of her affection; she cannot speak to him, but her heart is kindled, and must speak kindly: And it shews, that their parting is in very good terms, like friends. 4. It shews her clearness of her interest in him, on which she grounds this suit, so as heartily she thereby makes ready, and prepares for his coming, knowing that he is hers.

3dly, The qualification of her suit is in these words, *Be thou like to a roe, or a young hart, upon the mountains of spices*: roes and harts frequent mountains, and do run swiftly, speedily and pleasantly on them, as hath been often said; see upon chap. 2. 8, 17. The allusion and scope here is, As roes and harts run swiftly over mountains, so, my Beloved (saith she) make haste to return with all diligence: or, because *the mountains of spices* signify some excellent mountains, such as, it may be, were not ordinary for roes and harts to run upon (tho' in these countries it might be so in part) therefore we may read the words thus, *my Beloved, be thou upon the mountains of spices, like a roe, &c.* and so heaven may be compared to such savory and refreshful mountains. The scope is one, and speaks thus, Now, my Beloved, seeing there is a time coming, when there will be a refreshful meeting betwixt thee and me, never to be interrupted, therefore I intreat thee, so to expedite thy affairs which are to proceed, which in reason I cannot obstruct, that that blessed and longed-for meeting may be hastened, and thou may come to receive thy Bride at the last day. From all these, *Observ.* 1. which is supposed, That there is a final and glorious coming of our Lord Jesus to judgment, which will be, when all that he hath to do in the earth is perfected; otherwise this could not be prayed for by the Bride. 2. It is implied, that this coming of Jesus Christ is a most comfortable and desirable thing to believers: there is nothing that they most aim at, and pant for, than his company; and that being so desirable here, it must be much more so hereafter, when all his people shall be gathered to him, and the Queen shall be brought to the King in raiment of needle work, and shall enter into the palace with him, there to abide for ever: That cannot but be desirable, and therefore it is pressed as her farewell-suit. 3. This suit of the Bride's implies, that this glorious coming of our Lord Jesus is much in the thoughts of his people, and useth to be meditated on by them; for, this prayer of hers, is the expression of what useth to be in her heart. 4. It implies, that believers ought to be established in the faith of Christ's second coming, so as it may be a ground of prayer to them. 5. Even the thoughts of this second coming, which flow from the faith thereof, long ere it come, will be refreshful to the believer. 6. It is peculiar to the believer to be delighted with, and to be longing for Christ's second coming; for, it agrees with this relation the Bride hath to him, as *her Beloved*: And whatever others may say, yet this coming of Christ Jesus really is, and will be dreadful to them; and therefore are believers differenced from all others by this name, that they are such *who love his appearing*, 2 Tim. 4. 8.

That we may further consider this prayer of the Bride's, we may look upon it, *first*, more generally, and so gather these. *Observ.* 1. Faith and love will compend much in few words, and will thrust together many suits in a short expression: There is much in this same word, *flee*, or *haste*; it is not the longest prayer that is made up of manifold words. 2. Faith in Christ, and love to him, where they are in exercise, will make the believer to meddle in his prayers with things of the greatest concernment; so doth this.

this prayer of the Bride's, it looks not only to his second coming, but also takes in the overturning Satan's kingdom, the calling of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, the dissolution of heaven and earth, &c. which go alongst with, and before, Christ's coming: These are great things, and yet that they may be accomplished, is that which she here prayeth for. 3. Faith will look look far off in prayer, it will be minding things that are to be performed long after the person's removal out of this life.

Again, we may consider this suit as it followeth on the former long conference, and goes before the off-breaking thereof: And so, *Observe*, 1. That the most lively and longest continued enjoyments of Christ, that believers have here upon earth, may, and will have their interruptions and off-breakings for a Time: Uninterrupted communion is reserved for heaven. 2. Believers, that have been admitted to familiar access unto, and fellowship with Christ Jesus, would endeavour to have it distinctly breaking off; so that, although they cannot entertain it alway, yet they would be careful that it slip not away, and they not knowing how, nor understanding in what terms their souls stand with Christ; neglects here occasion many challenges. 3. These who are best acquainted with fellowship with Christ here-away, and are clearest of their interest in him, will be most desirous of, and most pressing after, his second coming: And the little acquaintance, that many have with him here-away, is the reason that so few are taken up with this suit. 4. When believers have been admitted to much sweet fellowship with Christ, before their sun decline, or before his sensible presence be withdrawn, they ought to have a new design and desire tabled for his returning; and this is a good way to close such sweet and comfortable conferences with Christ, by referring distinctly to a new meeting, especially this last, which will never admit of a parting again. 5. When temporal enjoyments of Christ break off, believers would endeavour the clearing of their hope of that eternal enjoyment which is coming, and would comfort themselves in the expectation of that, which no time will put an end unto.

3dly, We may consider the words in themselves, as this particular prayer holds forth a pattern and copy of prayer to believers, and as the Bride evidenceth the nature of true love by this suit. And so we may *Observe*, 1. That it is the duty of a believer to long and pray for Christ's second coming; and when they are in a right frame and case, they will do so: Love to Christ himself, who at his appearing is to be glorified, love to the Church in general, which that day is to be adorned as a bride for her husband, and fully to be freed from all outward crosses and inward defects, and love to a believer's own happiness, which that day is fully to be perfected, do all call for this. 2. This second coming of our Lord doth fully satisfy the believer in all respects; they have no suit nor prayer after this: when that day is once come, there will be no more complaints, all sorrow and sighing flies then away; there will be then no more prayer, for there will be no more necessities and wants, but all they can desire will be then enjoyed, and praise will be the work of that blessed world, amongst all the saints to all eternity: There will be no such use of the promises and of faith, as we have of them now, but all will be in possession; our warfare will be ended, and our victory compleated, when we shall see him as he is, and be like him: It is no marvel then that the Spirit and the Bride say, *Come*, and cry constantly, *Haste, my Beloved*, until this desire be fulfilled, *Even so, come. Lord Jesus.*

F I N I S



